

RECONCILIATION
PREPARING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Submitted to
New York Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Birmingham, Alabama

2015

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2015

Abstract

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This project seeks to answer a timeless biblical question asked in 1 John 4:11-24—“Can a man love God and hate his brother?” How can believers and Christians who profess regeneration and reconciliation to Christ actively and openly hate, and commit evil toward others? An exegesis of this text and the doctrine of The Kingdom of God are the biblical foundations for this discussion. Biblical sermons, lectures, public forums, and interviews were also utilized to shed light on the question and the answer.

Additionally, one thousand people were sent a link to an online anonymous biblical and racial reconciliation survey and four hundred twenty-six responded to the survey. Respondents expressed a clear need and desire for reconciliation training, and also thought that training would make a positive difference in achieving harmony among cultures. The survey strongly suggests that respondents possess a good understanding of our nation and our world’s changing diversity and relational issues and the implications of an untrained and an uninformed populace in the years to come.

This project highlights and supports the ongoing need for biblically-based reconciliation training and awareness with emphasis on the doctrine of the Kingdom of God; particularly for and by clergy, faith based-organizations and believers. Biblical doctrines are a reflection of God’s wisdom and instructions on living, reconciliation and for entering the Kingdom of God. Similar training is also essential for our educational systems if we are to successfully meet the multicultural challenges of future generations.

The efforts and writings included here are dedicated to my family: my mother and father who passed away and missed this part of my life's journey, my husband who has always been my greatest supporter in everything, and my children, with the hope that the world will evolve into The Beloved Community during their lifetime.

Acknowledgments

I am sincerely grateful to New York Theological Seminary for encouraging me to dig deeper into the things of God. The experience and insight of “digging deeper” into the things of God have provided immeasurable revelation for my journey along with a strong sense of contentment and peace of mind. I am thankful to the many churches and educational institutions that have allowed me to permeate their midst in search of additional revelations to a ‘beloved community’. I am grateful for prayers and for every expression of assistance, encouragement and support.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Gwen Tilghman who served as my advisor and to my entire site team and to Rev. Dr. Shirley Richards who served as my site team chair. I am indebted to so many more. Most especially I thank my cohort for their never-ending patience and encouragement and for recognizing the spiritual and worldly need for us to bond. The cohort itself has been a unique gift to each individual member.

I am grateful to my family for their encouragement and support and especially my husband and confidant, Jerome McKinstry. God gave me to him and he has never wavered in his emotional and spiritual support in all that I do. May God continue to watch over him and our family in all of the years to come.

I am forever grateful to God for my journey and for His plan for my life. God creates, sustains and protects his creation. My prayer is simply to live worthy of His calling and to one day live eternally in His Kingdom.

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INTRODUCTION

I believe that I have been preparing for this season in my life since my birth and throughout my life's experiences. This preparation began in Birmingham, Alabama. I was seeking the "deep things" of life at a very young age. One of the most probing questions that I had was why people of color were so hated by whites in the south, and (I assumed) all over the world. This was a question that would haunt me for most of my young life and would become the basis of most of my major and critical decisions. This same question would present itself at every intersection and crossroad over and over again. There would come a day when I would be convinced that God had provided for me an answer to this question of hatred.

I have always believed in the value of the life of every human being. Growing up in a household of six children meant that the rules of "doing unto others as you would that they do to you" were re-enforced daily for us by my father and mother. I developed a very strong sense of "self," but also a very strong sense of "others." This was validated and supported by grandparents who worked in ministry. Both of my maternal grandparents were educators and ministers of the gospel. I loved the work of traveling to rural areas of the state and organizing vacation Bible school which lasted two weeks in each area. We also visited indigent families and grieving families, and sought to be of

service in whatever circumstances were presented. I loved every aspect of the work of the church, and most especially doing this work with my grandparents.

I also loved being involved in my local church with my family. It was an opportunity to learn and grow in the ways of God. It was also an opportunity to learn simple things like speaking publicly, internal administrative workings of the church and interaction with people of all kind in locations in and outside of the state. I believe that my love of social justice began with my working in all of these environments: home, church, school and other temporary extended environments.

The experiences of life (I believe) awaken us inside, put us in touch with ourselves and identify for us who we really are, and perhaps, who God is calling us to be. Growing up in a state and city whose reputation for hatred and prejudice was known world-wide left me in a continuous state of anxiety. I lived through two bombings, lost four friends in one of the bombings and saw a United States President and two compassionate civil rights leaders murdered—all before I was twenty-one years old.

All believers have been called into the ministry of reconciliation regardless of the other gifts that have been entrusted to them. God has reconciled Himself to us through His Son Jesus Christ, and has given to each believer the ministry of reconciliation. We are called to be ambassadors ourselves as though God Himself were pleading through us to the world to be reconciled to God. Ministry therefore is not limited to pastoring, preaching, teaching, evangelizing or healing. Ministry activities are not confined to the space within the walls of the church. The Church is in us. Ministry encompasses all aspects of our daily living. God has called each believer to be a witness on His behalf in whatever we say and do, wherever we are.

I believe that God has called me to be an itinerant in several ministries as reflected through my work with poor and rural women, at home and abroad. I am also called to bear witness to the human and social effects of the sin of hatred; but to also bear witness to the power and healing of forgiveness and love. I share much of my early life story in chapter one and how I came to be on this journey for God.

I encounter many people and many issues in itinerant ministry. I address the people, problems and solutions from a biblically based framework. God has provided a path, a light for our journey through this world, and that light is the Bible, His Word. Our way is made plain and God has not promised the absence of trouble, but He has promised never to leave us or forsake us. It is this promise that enables us to continue the journey in faith, knowing that we already have the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER ONE REPEATING THE PAST

The following pages contain excerpts from several personal narratives that I have prepared and used for various occasions. The narrative provides keen insights into the “state” of the nation in which I was born. Many of the questions that I attempt to answer throughout this writing began with my birth; and with subsequent ongoing societal attempts at normalization into the segregated way of life. Birmingham enjoyed a system of court-sanctioned legalized segregation for many years, and like the Alabama Constitution of 1901 guaranteed perpetual “privilege and status” to whites. The systemic inequities continue to negatively impact the nation and the lives of all of its citizens, as well as to generate ethical and humanitarian questions from the larger global society.

Separate schools must be established for the children of African descent. It is unlawful for colored children to attend any white school or any white children to attend a colored school.¹

Birmingham, Alabama has been characterized by some as America’s Johannesburg, by many civil rights leaders as a city of “hard core” resistance and by one of its former mayors, Richard Arrington, Jr., as a city that needed to be ‘born again’. In a New York Times article written in 1960, Harrison Salisbury said that “fear and hatred

¹ “Jim Crow Laws,” American Radio Works,
<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/remembering/laws.html> (accessed February 20, 2015).

gripped Birmingham.”² It was the most segregated, the most racist, and the most vicious city in the south. The white citizens of Birmingham enjoyed legalized segregation in every aspect of life for over 100 years. It was difficult for whites but even more so for blacks to imagine that any aspects of this lifestyle would ever change.

My initial introduction to segregation came when I was ten years old. My grandmother became very ill and was brought from Clanton, Alabama to Birmingham. Hospitals in Birmingham did not accept black patients. But when taken to a local hospital she was allowed to have a bed in the basement. My parents needed to be at work so I sat with my grandmother for about two weeks until she died. My second introduction to segregation occurred when I was in the eighth grade. I won the A. G. Gaston statewide spelling competition, but could not participate in the national competition because of segregation. By the time I entered high school Governor George Wallace had made his famous “segregation now, tomorrow and forever speech.”³

In spite of itself, Birmingham was seen as a “city of great promise,” a post-civil war city that was “on the move.” Birmingham’s natural resources (coal, iron ore and limestone) attracted settlers and immigrants from all over the United States and the world. In 1901 the state leaders of Alabama held a constitutional convention and a new constitution conceived in racism was born. The framework of the 1901 constitution which remains in place today continues to guarantee the perpetuation of white supremacy and privilege in every aspect of life.

² Harrison E. Salisbury, “Fear and Hatred Grip Birmingham,” *New York Times*, April 12, 1960, <http://reportingcivilrights.loa.org/authors/selections.jsp?authorId=70> (accessed February 20, 2015).

³ Governor George C. Wallace, “Inaugural Address,” January 14, 1963 <http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/singleitem/collection/voices/id/2952/rec/5> (accessed February 20, 2015).

In 1954 the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v Board of Education* had decreed integration with all deliberate speed; Birmingham schools remained segregated. The black community developed “self-contained communities” with schools, churches, businesses and homes. They refused to be held back and worked hard to insure that their children were educated; and in addition provided opportunities for advancement.

Beginning in 1950 a fiery and courageous young minister named Reverend Fred Lee Shuttlesworth emerged in Birmingham and the city came face to face with its mistreatment of its citizens of color, their demands for first class citizenship, and an end to segregation of public facilities, especially schools. Rev. Shuttlesworth invited Dr. Martin L. King to come to Birmingham and to give voice to the struggle for equality and first class citizenship.

Black homes, businesses and churches were routinely bombed in Birmingham in an attempt to intimidate, to frighten and to end the struggle for equality and equal access. Birmingham soon came to be known around the world as “bombingham.” Both men reminded the state and the nation of their founding statutes declaring “all men were created equal and entitled to the pursuit of happiness.” Signs were carried by protesters asking: “can a man love God and hate his brother?” It was from this platform that Birmingham and its children marched until the back of segregation was broken. The historical records indicate that well over 5,000 adults and children marched and went to jail. The records also record their ages from 8 to 80 years old.

President John F. Kennedy subsequently issued a report on desegregation attempts in Alabama in September 1963, and ended it with words of hope for compliance by Alabama’s Governor George Wallace. Wallace responded to this report in the *New*

York Times by saying, “in order to stop school integration, Alabama needed a few first class funerals.”⁴ Wallace got his first class funerals a short time later.

The end of legalized segregation resulted in the death of four little girls: Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carol Robertson and Cynthia Wesley. On September 15, 1963, a bomb exploded at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church killing four young girls and injuring many others. The bombing of the church was characterized by the media as the “bomb heard around the world.” The lesson for that day was “A Love That Forgives.” On September 30, 1963 Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth spoke these words: “As shocked as we are about past and recent bombings and deaths, and as tired as we are of brutality by certain forces and neglect by officials, we still believe in non-violence as the way to solve problems and pledge ourselves anew to follow this course.”

Dr. King delivered the eulogy for the four little girls.

Their deaths say to us that we must work passionately and unrelentingly to make the American dream a reality. So they did not die in vain. God still has a way of wringing good out of evil. History has proven over and over again that unmerited suffering is redemptive. The innocent blood of these four little girls may well serve as the redemptive force that will bring new light to this dark city. The Holy Scripture says, “And a little child shall lead them.” The death of these little children may lead our whole southland from the low road of man’s inhumanity to man to the high road of peace and brotherhood.⁵

The response to the deaths of these four little girls sustained the people’s hope that justice, love and transformative change would one day arrive and reign in the Birmingham.

⁴ Claude Sitton, “Birmingham Shuts Schools Scheduled for Integration,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1963.

⁵ Martin L. King, Jr., “Eulogy for the Martyred Children,” speech delivered Birmingham, Alabama, September 18, 1963 http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/eulogy_for_the_martyred_children/ (accessed February 20, 2015).

One positive result of the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement was the development and construction of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in 1993. The Institute serves as a repository for pictures, documents, historical artifacts, etc. The attendance records indicate that people from all over the world come every single day of every year to visit the Institute and also to visit the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. The Church has been designated a National Historic Landmark. Both are reminders of Birmingham's dark and difficult past. Both are reminders of the struggle of a people to be free.

Visitors and locals want to touch the places and hear the stories. They want to know how we survived and how we maintained a spirit of hope. Birmingham has a legacy of segregation, but also a legacy of hope. It stands symbolically as a "beacon" of eternal hope for its residents and its visitors. I have come to recognize that the burden of that hope weighs on those who appear to be minimally or un-impacted by the inequities of the system. The hope is that you can provide insight into overcoming the system; the burden is that you can understand that every individual has to grasp it for themselves.

I continue to receive invitations from around the nation and the world to come and share stories about Birmingham. Even during visits to Rome, India, and a monastery in Ireland (Limerick), the residents knew the story of Birmingham, Alabama. I was invited to Cullman, Alabama in 2012. Cullman is the birthplace of the Alabama Ku Klux Klan. In the past, travelers would encounter a huge billboard (directed to Negroes) as they entered the city of Cullman which read: "Don't let sundown catch you in Cullman ni----." I visited Cullman and was greeted by the Mayor, school superintendent and combined middle and high schools and faculty. Reconciliation awareness was clearly visible in

Cullman. And more importantly hundreds of young people from local schools were included in the programmatic reflection of where we have come from and where we are going as a city, and as a nation. It was a glorious day!

We have made tremendous strides toward our goals of reconciliation and the 'beloved community'. But sadly, much of Dr. King's commentary on segregated life still rings true today. In 1963, Dr. King stated, "We must face the sad fact that at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning when we stand to sing 'In Christ there is no East or West,' we stand in the most segregated hour of America."⁶ This too remains virtually unchanged.

The passage of the 1964 Civil Rights legislation led most citizens of good will across our country to believe that we as a nation were now well on our way to at least minimal measures of equality and reconciliation with the work ongoing. There was a plaque placed in faith in Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham, Alabama (located across from the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute) whose inscription read: "A place of revolution and reconciliation." We now realize that this plaque was prematurely placed.

We believed that America would finally honor her promises, as well as the decisions of the courts. The nation's courts made equitable changes in the areas of education, housing, and employments. Visitors to our city and nation noticed and commented on the changes (or appearance of change). What things really changed? Did Alabama's 1901 Constitution change? Did the peoples' hearts change? What changed?

⁶ Martin Luther King, ed. Susan Carson, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.* vol. 6, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 149.

Well, we took the “colored” and the “white” signs down. And what many of us did not realize until almost 30 years later is that across the nation “underground efforts” quietly began almost immediately to dismantle, avoid, preclude, and/or circumvent all that the courts had ordered to promote nationwide democracy. It was as if someone had written a book entitled “How to dismantle, avoid, preclude and circumvent mandates of the 1964 Civil Rights Legislation.” It was also as if every state government in the United States received a copy of that book. It was really a telling moment when in May 2014 I travelled to Topeka, Kansas to speak and reflect with locals on the sixty year anniversary of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision; and sadly had to acknowledge that our schools had generally re-segregated themselves. In 2014 the headlines of the Birmingham News read: “Birmingham Public Schools – 99% Black.” The following article articulates the ongoing struggle:

Sixty years after *Brown v. Board of Education* ended systemic segregation in public education, many schools are returning to their Jim Crow past. Hundreds of school districts nationwide have been released from court-ordered integration mandates, resulting in “rapid and continual re-segregation” as poorer black children find themselves attending almost exclusively-black schools, the investigative journalism nonprofit Pro-Publica reports today.

The story focuses on a Tuscaloosa high school that a decade ago was held up as a model of successful integration and today is 99 percent black. The challenge of integration is familiar territory for Alabamians. Across the state, 43 school systems remain under some form of federal oversight for desegregation. AL.com has reported the ongoing saga of one of the state's largest systems still under court order.

Huntsville City Schools earlier this year elected to fight the U.S. Department of Justice, seeking an end to 44 years of federal oversight. The district and federal officials have been in negotiations regarding zoning. Huntsville last month argued in court the law has changed over time, allowing for racial isolation by housing patterns, and the Justice Department arguments haven't kept up. “Contrary to the apparent belief of

the United States, this is not 1963 or 1970, reads a Huntsville brief from last month.”⁷

Most of us understand that we cannot legislate morality. Racism and its related actions are moral sins. Laws in place—absent of moral-minded people—will inevitably net the same results. But even in the presence of moral-minded people—ultimately what we have at any given time is whatever this moral majority demands. If they are satisfied with the “status quo,” nothing will change. If the moral majority demands democracy, peace and equity, we will see it evolve.

Things appeared peaceful in our nation for seemingly about 30 years. Then, it was as if a sleeping giant gradually awakened and we began to move once again in the same direction to the same crossroads where we had found ourselves so many times before. We were once again in a war for the soul of America.

We continued to see daily evidence of retrenchments. The falling back of progress reminded me of when we were children growing up in Birmingham. We would walk past ant beds in a yard and take a stick or our shoes and just flatten them to the ground. When we later travelled that path again the ants would have almost rebuilt what had been torn down. So we would start all over and tear the ants’ progress down again. And the ants continued the cycle of rebuilding. Our history books are replete with stories from slavery to vagrancy, from convict leasing to segregation, from exclusion of privileges to unevenly weighted mass incarceration and disciplinary measures that reflect our constant pushback or tearing down of progress.

⁷ Stan Diel, “Segregation again? Racial picture of Alabama schools changes 60 years after Brown v. Board of Education,” AL.com, April 16, 2014, http://blog.al.com/wire/2014/04/segregation_still_racial_pictu.html?appSession=553494403213820&RecordID=&PageID=2&PrevPageID=1&cpipage=2&CPISortType=&CPIorderBy= (accessed February 20, 2015).

So here we are once again looking for political solutions to a problem described by President John Kennedy in 1963 as being “as old as the scriptures and as clear as the American Constitution. The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal opportunities and equal rights.”⁸ Many felt that President Kennedy while not a preacher had spoken to the heart and soul of America.

Many would call some of these comments extreme or hysterical. When you have seen the depths of hatred, when you have seen that men are willing to step off into the abyss (and carry you with them) in the name of hatred, you develop an ongoing consciousness of observing, watching and always praying. You began looking for ways to raise the consciousness level of those you encounter regarding the work of the enemy.

It was by way of these experiences as a young child and so many more as a young adult that I began to ponder the question of reconciliation. I began to see that in most conversations it was always assumed that you meant racial reconciliation, regardless of the ethnicity of the individual. But clearly if God said to be reconciled to Him and our brother (whoever and whatever color or culture), both aspects of reconciliation must be possible to achieve. I have come to believe that the life of a person of color in America is one of continually approaching an intersection whose only marker and signage is a large question mark, a question mark to the words that helped build this nation.

We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator God with certain inalienable rights. That among these rights are life liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

⁸ “Report to the American People on Civil Rights, 11 June 1963,” televised speech by President John F. Kennedy, June 11, 1963, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/LH8F_0Mzv0e6Ro1yEm74Ng.aspx (accessed February 20, 2015).

President Kennedy's question remains unanswered as to whether all citizens of this country are to be afforded equal access and opportunities. Dr. Martin L. King had a dream that the nation would rise up and embrace all of its citizens, regardless of any differences. That dream is not yet fully realized. And I am still dreaming. My faith and dreams are such that I believe that one individual can accomplish a lot, albeit one person at a time.

Our country has officially claimed February as annual Black History month. We have written books, built educational institutions and museums, and created support organizations to remind us of those times when we didn't get it right in our country. Many of our states have developed educational curricula in the public schools regarding African Americans, Irish Americans, Native Americans, Japanese Americans and the other immigrants represented in our society in America. We are living perhaps in the most diverse period ever in America. The United States Census indicates that by 2040 we will have no "majority minority" in this country.

Dr. King believed that the three moral imperatives of our time were racism (and its perennial ally – exploitation), poverty and war. He believed that like men – these imperatives were each interdependent. He believed that we had the means to solve the problem, but perhaps not the will.⁹ America continues to be plagued by prejudice and racial hatred. I believe that the sinful hate problem of America may one day be its destruction. A recent report by the Southern Poverty Law Center counted 1,007 active hate groups in the United States in 2012. Only organizations and their chapters known to

⁹ Martin L. King, *Where Do We Go From Here: Essential Writings and Speeches* (New York: Harper Collins, 1986).

be active during 2012 are included. Hate groups have beliefs or practices that attack or malign entire classes of people.¹⁰

I continue to ask the question, Where does hate come from? And how should the recipient respond to hate? Personal hatred is forbidden in the New Testament (Matt. 5:43-45). The Christian life should be an embodiment and reflection of God's love (Matt. 22:37-40). Our only expression of acceptable hatred should be towards evil (Heb. 1:9, Jude 23, Rev. 2:6 and 17:16). We must discipline ourselves to hate anything that is identified with the spirit of evil and is antagonistic to the cause of Christ. We are never required to acquiesce to or accommodate evil. Yet much of the recent hatred is directed toward those who have experienced the greatest levels of poverty and disenfranchisement.

In the United States today more than 11.7% of white America lives in poverty; 25.7% of black America lives in poverty; and 23.3% of Latino or Hispanic individuals live in poverty.¹¹ And we continue to be plagued by war and the threat of more wars. The same three ills that plagued us fifty years ago continue to plague us today. And yet we still have a church on every corner. I believe that God's ministers belong on the front line in protest of each of these three ills in America. Ingrained in each of our religious traditions is the belief that by one God we were all created, and that we were created in His image.

When we see others suffering, we should see ourselves. Something in us ought to be forever restless as we continually encounter our sisters and brothers impacted by these

¹⁰ Southern Poverty Law Center, "Hate Map," <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map> (accessed February 20, 2015).

¹¹ Alabama Poverty Project, "2013 Alabama Poverty Data Sheet," <http://www.scribd.com/doc/144513416/2013-Alabama-Poverty-Data-Sheet> (accessed February 20, 2015).

dynamics. Our common humanity and the Spirit of the Almighty should rise up in us in righteous indignation at the neglect, destruction and the decay of God's creation. The revolution of values purported by Dr. King must become reality if we are to avoid destruction and an end tantamount to the one described below by James Baldwin.

A bill is coming that I fear America is not prepared to pay. "The problem of the twentieth century", wrote W. E. B. Dubois 100 years ago, "is the problem of the color line."

A fearful and delicate problem, which compromises, when it does not corrupt, all the American efforts to build a better world- here, there, or anywhere . . . And here we are, at the center of the arc, trapped in the most gaudiest, most valuable, and most improbable water wheel the world has ever seen. Everything now, we must assume is in our hands; we have no right to assume otherwise. If we – and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on or create the consciousness of others – do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in song by a slave is upon us: God gave Noah the rainbow sign, no more water, the fire next time!¹²

I believe that in Baldwin's warning Christians will hear a prophetic message that perhaps has not yet been internalized by great numbers of humanity. And in many ways the social construct of many of our churches has begun to mimic the more negative aspects of the social construct of our society. The church historically was always a staple and shelter for its members. Meanwhile, many churches have morphed and evolved and developed individual theologies. Many are family owned. Many churches have become privatized. God calls preachers, prophets and theologians and not CEO's to share the good news. People are unchurched, home church, socialized and "just churching." The

¹² James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dell, 1963), 141.

concept of Church dominates the concept of religion in the sense that individuals join by faith and then follow the mandates and social order orchestrated by the church. We must urgently be about our Father's business, spreading the gospel and bringing the Kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven. Just where and how do we begin?

I am a sixty-seven years old eyewitness with a hard-earned degree in human behavior. I consider it a special gift from God that I was born in 1948 when all of our hateful history was peaking. I have seen us at our worse. I saw much of our country begin to move to higher ground. And then I saw us begin to retreat to the lowlands again. I am not certain if higher ground at whim or convenience will continue to be an option. I believe that God has given us numerous opportunities and unlimited second chances to fix our tremendously pre-occupying race problem. The race problem may be the only Christian test which we have completely and continually failed.

The society that we have formulated, which predicates the success of some on the failure of others, will ultimately require serious explanation from us to God. We can without exception expect God's judgment on this relentless sickness of enforced racism. We cannot separate religion from our daily living and expect that God will validate this choice. We can all be assured that there will be no special privileges, or special doors, or special seating or time-outs in the Kingdom of God. We can also be assured of individual accountability as we stand before the God of judgment and the God of history and justice.

CHAPTER TWO CITY OF GOD

Today, the painful reality of hatred and segregation remains unchanged. As an ordained clergy woman, veteran civil rights activist, author and international traveler educating audiences on the Modern Civil Rights Movement, I can see clearly that the biblical imperative of reconciliation, of loving God and of 'loving others as ourselves' remains an elusive commandment.—Rev. Dr. Carolyn M. McKinstry

The State Of The Nation's Faith Community

And in those days Israel had no King; and each did according to what was right in his own mind (Judges 21:25).

Some Biblical scholars attribute the writings of Judges to Samuel. Others believe that the author is unknown. What we know for sure is that during the period of Judges, it was God who allowed them into the hands of their enemies, and ultimately it was God who delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. God is forever our Judge and forever our Deliverer.

In the very last verse of Judges we see these words: "In those days Israel had no King; everyone did as they saw fit" (16:7). This passage is repeated four times in the book of Judges (17:6, 18:1, 19:1 and 21:25). The words are compelling and captivating to me because they seem to mimic the condition of our world today. There appears to be no earthly or spiritual king as we take note of daily events happening in the world, then and now. The following description in 2 Timothy which is potentially portraying the terrible times of the last days is very sobering.

People are lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful and proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Timothy 4:1).

Do any (or all) of these descriptions appear to be the “future shock” or the theme of today’s reality? What you are reading in 2 Timothy and witnessing today is the description or “word picture” of an unreconciled world.

One of my initial observations of the Bible was that from beginning to end, from Old Testament to New Testament, God is continually making a way for us to be reconciled to Him. Seeing that we were unable to live a sinless life on our own, God dispensed His grace and sacrificed His Son Jesus Christ so that we would once again be in fellowship with Him. The world that we live in today is not the world that God intended us to live in. God had a better plan for His creation.

For he was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder was God (Heb. 11:10).

The verses preceding Hebrew 11:10 speak to the faith of Abraham. Abraham was called by God to go to a place that he had never seen, visited or even heard about. He was promised that in reward for his faithfulness, he and his sons would one day inherit the land. He speaks about this city in terms of permanence (having lived nomadically in tents most of his life). Abraham looked forward to “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 11:22), or to “the city that was to come” (Heb. 13:14). We can all only imagine what the “city whose architect and builder is God” will look like. But like Abraham we have faith in what we cannot see and faith in the promises of God. We believe it because God said it.

There are a few things that I would call “prerequisites” to envisioning and building a city that boasts of God as the architect. These prerequisites are in the vision

that I have for Birmingham, Alabama. My vision is that of an inclusive city, without regard to race, gender, religion or other socio-economic persuasions. Everyone must feel valued and included. The people would willingly share mutual responsibility to the well-being of all: an “us vs. we” culture. The people of the city would be of healthy bodies, mind and spirits.

The foundational blueprint would take into account all prior historical events, valuing the diversity of those God created in His image and a working knowledge of good and evil. There would be reminders of all the things that we got right, and also reminders of those times when we did not get it right. This divinely orchestrated community would offer educational opportunities to all, and all would provide labor for the continuing growth and expansion of the Community. One’s sense of worth and who he or she is becomes established in the daily rigors of labor. Love and labor would be the primary cornerstones for the continuing well-being of this community.

We would encourage the sharing and transfer of power to those previously powerless and voiceless, with all recognizing that privileges bring with them great responsibility. To whom much had been given, much would be required. Our words and our dialogs would be anointed with grace. In all of this we would have democracy, peace, love and compassion. The full knowledge of God would permeate every environment. I believe that if God is the architect and builder, the city would be the one that Isaiah described.

Reading and studying God’s Word has allowed me to see just how far from the Word of God (the true teachings of Jesus) we have strayed. I began this journey in search of a biblical understanding and solution to the problem of racism in our world. I

understand that we are all descendants of the same parents: Adam and Eve. The beginning of sin (enmity, from the same Hebrew root as ‘enemy’) and alienation from God spread from the parents of the human race and followed all subsequent descendants. First Peter 2:11 tells us that we are aliens and strangers in the world, and that we should stay away from the sinful desires that wage war continuously against our soul. Sin seeks to overtake us. But God wants us to be reconciled to Him. When we are reconciled to God we are at peace with Him. When we are at peace with God, we are at peace with each other. And being at peace with each other might lead us to peace and healing of the lands, i.e. the nations.

There are numerous biblical passages that assist Christians in envisioning our future by providing a visual image of The Kingdom of God (Messianic Kingdom, Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven will be used synonymously throughout this discussion). All of these passages give us hope and allow us to continue on in faith in spite of what we see. These biblical passages speak to my spirit in a way that suggests that 1) there could be a reconciled world now (it is our responsibility and a biblical imperative), and 2) that indeed, some day (after the Eschaton) biblical images will become the Christian’s reality. The realities of today’s world will have been brought under the submission of the Word of God.

The book of Isaiah contains many such scriptures. These scriptures allow all of us to close our eyes and dream, and faithfully envision that one day we can achieve this peace through the continued preaching and teaching of the gospel, through reconciliation and ultimately, the return of Jesus and the Judgment. This will be God’s Kingdom come on earth.

In the famous passage about the Messianic age “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,” (Isaiah 11:6), peace and safety will be reflected in the fact that little children will be unharmed as they are playing with formerly ferocious animals. These conditions allow a vivid description of how the world will look and function when we (all the earth) has fully evolved into the age of the Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 2:2-4, 35:9, 65:20-25).

This vision hopefully will be the result of our continued preaching of the gospel and the ultimate re-appearing of Christ, or it may be a prophecy of things to come during Christ’s future reign on earth. This is the environment in which we will live when all of the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord. “Full” will mean filled, and that there is no room inside of us for anything else. When all the earth is full of the knowledge of God, we will have achieved reconciliation, God’s perfect plan. The world will be as God originally intended, sinless.

The return of God’s Messianic servant will be marked by the unleashing of judgment on the defiant, the unbelievers and the unrighteous. This ‘day of the Lord’ will be a day of fire as was earlier prophetically stated by James Baldwin. God’s people will be rescued from political and spiritual oppression. No more unjust leaders. A time of peace and safety will mark this new period. We will gather unto the mountain of the Lord’s Temple where He will teach us His ways and we will walk in His path. He will judge the nations and we will study war no more. We will walk in the light of the Lord. “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!! When we all see Jesus, we will sing and shout the victory!”¹³

¹³ Eliza E. Hewitt, “When We All Get to Heaven,” music by Emily D. Wilson, in *Pentecostal Praises* (Philadelphia: Hall-Mack Company, 1898).

But how do we (the faith community) get there? What do we do to propel ourselves faster in that direction? Can we speed up the full arrival of the Messianic Kingdom? I believe that biblical reconciliation is the key to the full arrival of the Messianic Kingdom. I believe that biblical reconciliation is the key to God's Kingdom come - here on earth. The theme of the Kingdom of God appears in the New Testament and in the Synoptic Gospels. The general expectation during that time was that a messiah was coming to save the people. The mental images of that messiah were of a warrior or perhaps a powerful king.

The primary doctrines associated with the Kingdom of God came from the teachings of Jesus himself. Jesus' teachings were primarily spiritual in nature. That is to say, the kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), not something you can see (Luke 17:20), and was of the spiritual and heavenly realm. We find the primary teachings of the Kingdom of God teachings in Luke and in the Parables in Luke and Matthew. These teachings reflect the relationship between Kingdom of God and the required spiritual nature of men. The Kingdom of God is also captured in the Lord's Prayer in Luke and Matthew. Paul says the kingdom of God is the inheritance in the saints (Eph. 1:18-19). All earthly things will pass away, but the Kingdom of God will remain. It will never pass away (Heb. 12:28).

The Kingdom of God is not of this world. We are told to seek the Kingdom first and all other things will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). When we leave this earthly domain we take nothing with us. And final judgment of our life, deeds and words will occur when we stand in judgment before Christ. Why then do we invest so much of

ourselves and our spiritual and physical energy into the temporal things of the world today? Why has the emphasis on worldly social things become our primary focus?

Perhaps the more critical question is how do we return to the true doctrines of the Kingdom of God? My ongoing review of old and recent books and literature revealed that somehow over the years there has continually evolved a glaring absence of the teachings of the doctrines of the Kingdom of God. We have substituted diversity, tolerance, multicultural training and other types of programs in lieu of Kingdom of God principles in an effort to validate and make people accept what God Himself created, and in His image. God created diversity Himself from the very beginning. Diversity is not new nor is it the brainchild of any of His creation. God does not need our validation or modifications on any aspect of anything He does; including any aspect of His creation. We need only know and love Him, and do His will.

I believe that the answers to our societal ills are spiritual (or the lacking thereof) in nature. I believe that God provided the answer two thousand years ago. I believe that the answer can still be found in His Word – and our will. For these reasons the primary research question that will continue to drive this writing is still: “Can a man love God and hate his brother?” God will reveal the answer and the implications of that answer? Additionally, what are the implications of the answer to this question to God’s church?

CHAPTER THREE

OLIVE BRANCH COMMUNITIES AND KINGDOM PRINCIPLES

My original proposal is slightly different from the plan of implementation that will be reflected here. I found it rather exciting when we developed our initial proposals to just imagine all of the wonderful and necessary things that could be done. My imagination worked overtime and my cup ran over. I am a recent cancer survivor and had to consider many things including health, finances and stress in 2013. In addition my mother (92) died during this season of my studies. Many adjustments were “not negotiable” and mandatorily forthcoming. There came additionally, a learning curve that required adaptations in the manner in which I undertook this project.

I began to read books and literature from seminal authors and clergy on the subject of reconciliation and I encountered the same recurring themes: justice, racial justice, liberation, social and economic justice, acknowledge the past. Or—can we forget the past, the sin of racism, racism in the church, race relations, diversity, multiculturalism, tolerance, fear, forgiveness, relations and no justice without reparations?

I also encountered many strategies for person to person reconciliation as well as church to church. I read about many reconciliation organizations and made phone contact with The Institute of Reconciliation in Mississippi and The Department of Reconciliation at Duke University. I am hopeful that I will continue the relationship after this work is

completed. I also encountered various definitions of reconciliation including the vertical/horizontal relationship with God. Theological discussion and exegesis for reconciliation to God and our brother was available from many sources.

I wanted to read about or hear an author actually challenge God's churches, the Faith Community and those people called by His name (Christians) on loving God but hating their brothers. We have only to read the daily or internet news to see the lack of reconciliation in our world today. The need for reconciliation permeates every aspect of our daily lives and relationships. Where is the love? I believe that love is as love does. I believe that love is unselfish and even sacrificial.

I believe that love is about all of the books, literature and topics that have been written on race and racial hatred and discrimination. Love is about the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. and all other institutions and organizations that we have established to remind us of our mistakes, and to say "never again." But I believe that ultimately love and hatred are of a spiritual nature and are all about our individual choice of God, or self-will and rebellion. Either we love and believe in God, believe His Word and follow His commandments, or we do not believe and we love the world.

I believe that reconciliation is a biblical imperative, both vertically and horizontally. I do not believe that God would have made it a biblical imperative if it were not possible to do. And I believe that vertical is not possible without horizontal and horizontal is not possible without vertical. I believe that reconciliation is for today. Reconciliation is not only the next generations to figure out or fix. The sins of every generation are preceded by the sins of the previous generation. Therefore, each current generation will facilitate the assuming and conditioning of those sins 'as part of their

inheritance' to subsequent generations meaning, that we must start now with our own generation.

We must begin to teach and live the Word of God and the Kingdom Principles, with all deliberate speed. We cannot and should not believe or hope that subsequent generations will get it right if we haven't taught them what is right. The kingdom of evil is real, always busy and loves it when we don't believe the reality of its existence. We are reminded daily of the generational effects of the historical and social realities of sin. But the Kingdom of God is real as well. The biblical imperatives of reconciliation are real. And God has not reserved reconciliation for heaven after the judgment. In fact I believe that reconciliation precedes and weighs in on the impending judgment.

What we have not learned and mastered on earth about reconciliation, love and forgiveness will not be revisited remedially in heaven. I do not believe that we can separate reconciliation from religion. We can try, but I do not believe that God will honor the effort or the result. Reconciliation is an individual decision, a "heart decision" for God, and for our brothers. I believe that out of the abundance of the heart we speak—but also "act."

I wanted, at the very least, for God's people to be taken to task for the current state of things on this beautiful earth that He created for all of us. I believed that the only way that this could happen was through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

For, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach except they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! (Romans 10:13-15 NIV).

I have spent all of 2014 and part of 2015 visiting various churches at home and in other states, as well as schools from middle to graduate level in my search to learn just how much of the gospel on reconciliation is being taught and supported. I provided biblical and historical lectures, sermons, and interviews, dependent on the ages and educational level of the listeners and always as requested. More recently I have been invited to a young male's prison to talk about God, history and individual responsibility. I have included a travel timeline in Chapter 5 to show the extent of my travel and speaking. I also developed a reconciliation survey which was circulated to over 1000 individuals, of which 426 responded. The results of the survey are discussed in Chapter 5. (See Appendix B.)

I am an ambassador for reconciliation and have been for over 25 years. I don't have a government title but I have met with heads of state in many countries including my own. Former President Jimmy Carter expressed to me that "God has given you a platform for reconciliation. Use it. And let me know if you need my support." In retrospect I would likely have become a member of the preaching cohort if I could have predicted where God was leading. I have every confidence that I am travelling according to God's itinerary. I felt the nudge of God so very long ago when I awakened one day to the fact of being in Birmingham. God nudged, I moved and have been moving every sense.

Through the years and the miles I have received many spiritual revelations. I can only speak for me on this reconciliation journey. I can try to offer rules, programs and suggestions. But God made each of us free-willed beings. Ultimately, the only individual I can speak for and account for is me. This is good because this is the way it will be at the

judgment. But I can offer intercessory prayers as well as use the platforms that God has given me to share His goodness and grace, reach others and try and make a difference.

God calls each Christian to reach out to others as an ambassador in His name. I found this difficult to do with technology and various forms of social media. He equipped me for person to person (face to face) communication. No one created in God's image is a stranger to me. Each of us should see the image of God in every individual that we encounter. I believe that sharing my story and His word creates a spirit of lament in the listeners. This is verified when they cry, ask what they can do, and ask if there is an organization or workshop for training. Young people ask: "How can we fix it?" I have found no substitute for "one on one" and "heart to heart" no matter what city or country I am in, and no matter what books and literature I have read. I have hundreds of letters from individuals—young and old—all wanting to do their part to improve the relationships between all people in in our country.

We need a spiritual starting place. We need to know and touch the hearts of individual people, not races, and listen and meet them where they are. We must realize that God places people in our paths and in our lives, and all for a purpose, so we must be careful how you entertain strangers.

Awareness and training is especially critical for young people beginning in middle school and including secondary and collegiate education. The U.S. Census projects that in the year 2040 there will be no "majority" minority. The focus on reconciliation to God and reconciliation to others (both biblical imperatives) is accomplished by ongoing awareness and teaching; and by emphasizing to each

generation the Kingdom principles—much in the same way as we teach and emphasize reading, writing and mathematics.

Training for non-faith environments will be entitled “Olive Branch Communities” and training in Faith environments will be entitled “Kingdom Principles.” Content for this training is based on majority survey responses as well as knowledge gleaned from reconciliation travels and related experiences.

Lastly, when I investigated the time and financial requirements for starting up and maintaining the goals that I previously set, I knew that I would not be able to accomplish them without substantial human resources, grants, incorporation as a 501(c)(3), technology and even more general organizing. Managing the travel and speaking schedule on my own has become quite cumbersome.

This project is something that I would love to have developed many years ago. I would still also like to see ‘A Reconciliation Center for Birmingham.’ I have made alternative substitutions in each area based on availability of time and required resources. The plan of implementation was re-defined and the resulting plan is reflected below. I have included programs, pictures and other memorabilia from the various activities in the appendix as information.

In order to raise awareness in the faith communities and churches in Birmingham and surrounding areas of the sustained segregation that exists, I developed and utilized sermonic messages around the theme of reconciliation. Several are included at the end of Chapter Four of this dissertation. A reconciliation survey was e-mailed to a list that included those who had been in the audience of many of my sermons or presentations. The very last survey question asked respondents who had previously been in the audience

of one of my presentations to provide their reaction to the message and also what they would do differently after hearing the message.

I also developed a fifty-two week devotional series (see Appendix C). In order to do this, I attended and completed a one-day course on writing devotionals at Samford University in Birmingham. The course included a copy of the book *Called To Write* by Edna Ellison and Linda Gilder. In addition to sermons and written text, I also developed various forms of contemporary media in delivery. Radio, Skype, googleforms.doc, conference calls, live “streaming” and teleconferencing were used in many of the discussions.

I was invited to be a speaker at a Town Hall meeting (State of the Nation) in Charlotte, NC along with Congresswoman Terry Sewell, State Senator Nina Turner (IL), Rev. William Barber of Moral Mondays (NC), Carroll Rhodes, Esq. and counsel for the Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP, and Honorable Eva Clayton (first woman elected from NC to Congress).

I will speak to ninety members of Congress on March 6, 2015 when the annual Congressional Pilgrimage arrives in Birmingham, Al. The delegation is headed by Congressman John Lewis of Georgia and Doug Tanner, the Executive Director. This will be my sixth year speaking to this delegation and I am preparing a special message on reconciliation for them.

In addition to the churches, I also sought to raise awareness in the schools and other academic settings in Birmingham and other non-faith environments extending invitations from middle through college levels in other states. I provided lectures on reconciliation, forgiveness and love at age-appropriate levels for each academic

environment encountered. These presentations were expanded with the use of other media. Listeners at academic institutions were also invited to complete the online reconciliation survey and provide feedback from the lectures they attended.

Prayer of Intercession

I have learned to trust the power of prayer and its power over the most difficult hearts. I therefore developed a prayer team of 7 persons in New York, D.C., Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia who would pray for America and the rest of the world. In 1-800 conferencing calls, the group prayed every Sunday night at 8pm CST for 1-2 hours. The agenda set by those on call who afterwards provided prayer and praise reports.

Initial intercessory prayers included prayer for all of God's churches, girls kidnapped from Nigeria, Nigeria at large, preachers and clergy all over the world, black men and all children. We also prayed that God would forgive all sins, known and unknown and heal the hearts and the lands.

I believe that prayer is an integral component of every religion. It allows us to lay our petitions at the feet of God. Prayer allows us to empty our heart and soul of the many burdens we may be carrying. Prayer brings us to God and in return God to us. The power and viability of prayer has not gone unchallenged. Many believe that the realities of the world become our realities as well. It is not surprising then that intercessory prayer is a rare mainstay in most households and even in many churches. I believe that whom God calls to ministry He also calls to prayer.

A prayer of intercession involves mediating for someone other than yourself. Prayers of intercession often occur in church settings to pray for those church members who are ill, in the hospital or in the military. An

individual may use intercessory prayer to seek God's will on behalf of others such as friends and family or people known to suffer tragedy.¹⁴

Intercession is praying earnestly for the needs of a particular person or situation.

Intercessory prayer lifts up the subjects, people, events and personal needs of others to God for His blessing and an answer. Praying for others has its historical roots in many of the biblical patriarchs, apostles, saints and prophets and everyday people. John 16:23 says “anything you ask from the Father, He will grant in my name.” God answers us because of Christ; just as we pray in the name of Christ. Intercessory prayer allows us to show our “oneness” or be on one accord with other members of the body of Christ. Prayer shows God’s people in unity.

Our prayer group interceded on behalf of the world wherever we saw the need. But our main focus of intercession was on behalf of reconciliation to God and our brothers as biblically mandated by God. Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah. Moses interceded for the people of Israel with their grumblings and murmurings, when they sinned before the Lord. He also interceded for Miriam’s healing of leprosy. Anna, the prophetess, served the Lord with prayers and fasting night and day. Christ interceded with the Father on behalf of all believers in John 17. All prayers are expressions of internal communion with God.

¹⁴ Steph Radabaugh, “Types of Prayer in Scripture,” http://www.ehow.com/info_8616833_types-prayer-scripture.html (accessed February 20, 2015).

Bible Verses About Intercessory Prayer (KJV)

The following verses speak of intercessory prayer, its rewards, and manner that it is to be performed.

1 Timothy 2:1 - I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

Matthew 18:19-20 - Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Romans 8:26 - Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Ephesians 6:18 - Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

John 15:7 - If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 16:23-24 - And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, What so ever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

Isaiah 62:6 - I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,

Jude 1:20 - But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

James 4:7 - Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Hebrews 11:6 - But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Kingdom Principles for Communities of Faith

Kingdom Principles were developed for faith environments and Olive Branch Communities training was designed for non-faith environments. An initial curriculum of five courses for faith communities is shown below:

Kingdom Principles

- Kingdom Principles: Exposition of the Lord's Prayer, The Parables, and The Beatitudes
- Exposition of Regeneration: A Biblical look at Regeneration
- God's Word: The Bible
- Embodying Reconciliation: Christian Consciousness and Character
- Ambassadors: Job Description

An initial curriculum of three courses for non-faith communities is shown below:

Olive Branch Communities

- United States History and Culture: Our Moral Compass (Lessons in citizenship, self-education and individual responsibility)
- Embodying reconciliation: Character of a Reconciler: Case studies in Love and Forgiveness
- Conflict Management: Choices and Will

Various forms of role play; case studies in forgiveness; analysis of the Kairos document (from South Africa); analysis of the Lord's Prayer; Beatitudes; Parables; Personal Vision or Theological Statement; Problem Analysis outline; and discussions on the importance of self-education and individual responsibility are the tools that will be used in the various training and workshop discussions for the faith and non-faith environments. They will be mixed and matched as "age or otherwise appropriate."

CHAPTER FOUR RECONCILIATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates His brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” And He has given us this command: “Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:20-21)

Can a man love God and hate his brother?
What are the implications of the answer for God’s Church?

My life long question has been why do people hate? Where does it come from? How do you hate people that you do not know? You simply and easily hate. I selected the passage from First John because his question was printed on the signs of the protest marchers in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. John responded to the question by telling us that if we say we love God and hate our brother, we are liars. How can we love something or someone that we have never seen and hate whom we see every day? I believe that man’s functional humanity depends on his knowledge of God and his relationship to God. We can only discover who we are when God’s Spirit has been welcomed and given residence in us. In the absence of God’s Spirit assuming residence in and becoming our spirit, our humanity will fail us.

No one has ever seen God (John 1:19). But God has revealed Himself to us and made known His presence to us in many ways. All love is derived from God. God’s love is the source of our love. We are unable to generate love in and of ourselves and apart

from God. The expression of our love toward others is God's love made manifest here on earth in us, His people. That is how others come to know love. They learn love from the love they see and experience in God's people. The Greek word *agape* is used to express the essential nature of God (1John 4:8). This is divine love, like God's love for us. Love is what love does or prompts others to do. John 3:16 says that God loved us so much, that He allowed His only Son to be killed. In effect His Son became or took on the sins of the world that we might not be sentenced potentially to eternal life without Christ.

God could have chosen to allow us to destroy ourselves and our chances of eternal life. But love which is the essence of His being made Him choose to provide a way that eternal life would be available to all who chose it. True Christian love expresses itself in unflinching obedience to the commandments and teachings of Christ. Love is represented by good works and seeks the higher good for all people. Love, like hatred, resides on the inside, in our hearts. And love, like hatred is visible through its outward result or form of expression. That is why in 1 John 3:15 says "he who hates his brother is a murderer," for the sin lies in the inward disposition and the act is only the "outward expression."

Romans 1:30-32 says "that those who do evil are God-haters . . . and approve of others who do these things." This suggests that evil conduct is not done out of ignorance of God's will, but rather is done out of rebellion, selfishness and self-will. Evil doers celebrate and applaud sin, rather than lamenting the sin(s). It is often difficult to identify individual sin, as is shown in the parable of the 'wheat and the tares' (Matthew 13:24-30). The reality of societal or systemic sins are sometimes seen only when we look at the society collectively. The truth of sin is especially loud and visible when society is silent in the persecution and mistreatment of the poor. The world rightly judges nations by how

they treat the least among them. Ultimately, our Christian religious experience should bind us closer to each other and to the establishment of the God's Kingdom.

God has determined that ultimately we will be judged on the basis of (1) truth, (2) deeds and (3) our possession of light or knowledge of the laws of Christ (Romans 2:1-16). Love of one's brothers becomes one of the tests of living in God, who is light (John 2:9-11). It is also seen further as evidence of being born of God (1 John 3:10-24) and is considered more important than righteous behavior. God's love living in us allows us freedom to do for others what God Himself would do. Authentic *agape* love is proven in three ways: by our love of/for God being reflected in loving others, our love visibly shown for our brother in word and deed, and finally by being obedient to the teachings of God. Those who hate are destined for a judgment of condemnation and eternal life separated from Christ. Hatred is a sin and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

What is hate? *Vine's Expository Dictionary* provides a clear explanation of this term: hate, hateful, hater, hatred. There are three major words for hate in the New Testament

1. *miseo* "is used especially (a) of malicious and unjustifiable feelings towards others";
2. *theostuges* refers to "those who practice these things are hateful to God";
3. *echthra* is often translated as enmity and is the opposite of *agape* love.¹⁵

Hatred and love cannot co-exist. Hatred, fear and anger can only exist in the absence of God's spirit. God does not co-exist with sin. We sin freely because God made us "free-willed" beings. We can exercise our will or not, in any situation we choose. We

¹⁵ Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, s.v. "hate," "hateful," "hater," and "hatred," <http://studybible.info/vines/Hate,%20Hateful,%20Hater,%20Hatred>.

choose to hate. We choose how we treat others. Every minute of every day we choose. If we did not have this freedom, we could not sin and do many other things. Sin could not exist in the absence of freedom. God has given us the right to choose: right or wrong, life or death. Choose life.

In Matthew 25:45 God speaks about “the least of these.” God clearly identifies with those individuals (called our neighbors) when we neglect, exploit, betray or turn our backs on them. All sin is ultimately done unto God as David expressed in his lament Psalm 51. God does not expect His people to neglect the least among us. He expects us to raise challenges when we see neglect in action. John is clear in his analysis of love. We cannot profess love for God while carrying hate in our heart and reflecting hate in our actions toward others. What shall we say to these things? What are the implications of hatred for all professing Christians and the general faith community?

I believe that the solution to our spiritual problems is found in re-discovering and teaching the Kingdom of God teachings and principles. One pastor speaking nationally has suggested that we need remediation courses in the Bible for preachers and members. Clearly we need sound doctrinal teaching that is grounded in the Kingdom of God principles taught initially by Jesus and later by His disciples. I believe that Walter Rauschenbusch has provided an excellent critique on where we have been and stand currently in the teaching of Kingdom of God principles. I also believe that returning to these principles is our only hope for a communal versus chaotic society.

Reconciliation and the Kingdom of God

I am convinced that the observation by Walter Rauschenbusch in 1917 was prophetic and far reaching when he noted the absence of the teaching of the Doctrine of the Kingdom of God and that church seemingly had become the replacement for this

doctrine. Rather than a Savior who was supreme in all things, the church had become supreme in all things and represented itself as the ‘shepherding overseer’ of the people. Rauschenbusch’s book clearly lays out the societal omissions, problems and solutions. Dr. Martin King, Jr. and others in later years would parallel much of their social gospel theology on the writings and works of Rauschenbusch.

Walter Rauschenbusch wrote in 1917 that “the gospel makes clear the sinfulness of the individual, but sheds no light on institutionalized sinfulness.”¹⁶ He strongly suggests that gospel of the Kingdom of God of which Jesus Christ always spoke has been gradually replaced by that of the church. This gospel was the essence of all of Jesus’ ethical teachings. He called his followers to return to the doctrine of the Kingdom of God. He believed that the gospel of the Kingdom of God was not subject to the pitfalls of religion. The church and the Christians ideally should be one and the same. The Kingdom of God should reside in each Christian.

God gave us the Bible as a “lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.” We do not have to walk in darkness. When we hide the Word of God in our heart, then we likely will not sin against God. The Bible is God’s time-tested Word. Proverbs 30:5 says that “every word of God is flawless.” It will never change or pass away. The church is made up of individuals, hopefully individuals that are disciples of God. Individuals are not perfect and capable of sin and or manner of evil. But the Bible, God’s word offers correction for individuals and for Church bodies at large.

Hebrews 4:12-13 says

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double edge sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it

¹⁶ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 5.

judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's site. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give and account."

If the church follows the teachings and doctrines of the Bible, there should be no mistakes or perversions that go unrecognized.

If by chance there are mistakes and perversions, they can be settled and made right – again with the teachings and doctrines of the Bible. The power of correction and cleansing is available to God's people in His word. One of the most important aspects of the doctrinal teachings of Jesus is our focus toward the future, or our eschatological hope. Psalm 139:19 says that "we are strangers here on earth." We await Christ's return. Those who died in Christ will sleep until His return. So our comfort and peace should not be largely or wholly in the things of this world. A focus on the church, whether it be the physical building or those inside as the mainstay of the gospel is to leave Christ out of the equation and out of the picture. We hope to live eternally with Christ in the Kingdom of God. Christ left us to go and prepare a place for us. He has promised to return for His church. But Ephesians 5:27 tells us that "He is returning for a church without spot or wrinkle." We must teach what preparation is needed for the return. A spotless church can only evolve if we teach the doctrines of the Kingdoms of God and establish with all that the wages of sin is death, or eternal separation from God.

The gospel lastly is revolutionary in design and speaks to the social and political forces that plague our society. The gospel speaks especially through the Parables and the Sermon on the Mount regarding the temperament, the words and the deeds of those who would enter that Kingdom. The Western world has become increasingly materialistic and filled with egotism and greed. The moral and spiritual standards have sharply declined. Many writers have reminded us and warned us that moral and spiritual decline always

precede national decline. The journey of our founding fathers toward a more perfect union has evolved into an ongoing nightmare. The country that was founded as “one nation under God” owes its allegiance to God. We have clearly “left our first love.” Ultimately, we all owe our allegiance to God. Our loyalty to God transcends the state, the nation and everything else. Whether we like it or not we are forever “a nation under God.” We will be judged accordingly.

If the church is going to fully recover its theology in general and the doctrine of the Kingdom of God specifically, there are many issues that will require consideration and redress. We can begin with the primary issue of the Kingdom of God. The teachings surrounding the Kingdom have been lost. These teachings are derived directly from the teachings of Jesus himself. Losing contact with the teachings means losing contact with the teacher himself. In addition the ethical teachings are also lost when the Kingdom teachings cease or are lost. I have visited many churches and church classes where the book of teachings is not the Bible. Instead a “currently written” book is being used as the teaching text. Slowly, but surely, we begin to dilute and forget our traditional teachings. The Kingdom has lost its dominant focus for Christians. It is no longer our goal or the main idea. Therefore, we increasingly focus more on the here and now, as well on individual versus collective (Kingdom) thinking and teaching.

Many define today’s church as the physical building. They no longer see themselves as the church, with the Kingdom principles having come to rest within them. The church building is a gathering place for worship, much like our homes or other places of respite. Anyone can enter the church building and anyone can become a member of those under the church’s name. None of us are equipped to determine who

should be within the building walls or not. But Acts 1:24 tells us emphatically that only the righteous can and will enter the Kingdom of God. God is able to see the heart of each and every person. The Kingdom teachings can be used as a mirror for the church and for each of us. We can see our mistakes, flaws, doctrinal errors, etc. But we receive correction each time we revisit the Kingdom doctrines.

The founding documents of our nation were written in very close proximity to the teachings emanating from the Kingdom of God doctrines. The founding fathers clearly were influenced by their religious teachings and had a very strong sense of a democratic process. We were founded as a Christian and a democratic nation. The democratic process has been seriously diluted (and in some cases hijacked) and no longer serves as the true basis for consideration and evaluation of decisions which impact all of God's creation.

When political and civil laws and authority become corrupt they function under a false faith, a false sense or definition of religion. There is no longer true religious undergirding and doctrinal support for democracy or the other processes in place. Wrong things appear to be right. This false faith is capable of all forms of nightmares and terror. Many "separatist" organizations considered themselves law abiding citizens and Christians protecting the rights of only certain identified citizenry. Since we know from John 10:10 that "the thief is capable of no good thing and comes to steal, kill and destroy" one would rightly have to question the real teachings or the motives of any such "Christian" organization. Jesus came that we might have abundant life, not take life away. The Kingdom doctrines would rightly serve as correction for any such organization.

Individuals mistakenly come to see their salvation and their future life as a function of the church. They do not see the salvation of all people as the primary task. The absence of the Kingdom of God teachings magnifies church life and functions. Generally then, the emphasis remains within the confines of the physical church. Life outside of the church is given little merit when there is no real emphasis on the existing surrounding social structure. Many inspiring ideas and themes can be derived from the teachings of the Kingdom of God. Kingdom conversation stimulates and generates great and unique ideas, in and outside of God's Kingdom.

What we have seen historically is that teaching the Kingdom of God doctrines breeds prophets, priests and theologians. Cornell West has raised a compelling question in his new book *Black Prophetic Fire* regarding the absence of prophets, priests and theologians coming out of the churches today. "Are we witnessing the death of Black prophetic fire in our time? Are we experiencing the demise of the Black prophetic tradition in present-day America? Do the great prophetic figures and social movements no longer resonate in the depth of our souls?"¹⁷ The heart of the civil rights movement was begun, continued and many victories won by the very prophets, priests and theologians that West is speaking of. Not just black, but white, Spanish (e.g., Luis Gutierrez), and many other cultures. The Kingdom message speaks to all people of God and is for all of God's creation. Much has been lost by the religious community in the absence of the teachings of the Kingdom of God. Can we recapture the excitement and magnetic effects of Kingdom principles? How do we reconnect to the ethical teachings of Jesus?

¹⁷ Cornell West, *Black Prophetic Fire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 1.

The prominent omission of Kingdom teaching can be corrected if we are willing to dig deep into the biblical text, identify the Kingdom teachings; as well as begin to reclaim and reemphasize them. It is important to reclaim these omissions and teach them for many reasons; the primary being that Kingdom teachings are divinely derived from the ethical teachings of Jesus. Jesus began these teachings and they have continued by way of God and the Holy Spirit. God's greatest purpose is accomplishing His Kingdom. Kingdom teaching is the seed of the Christian religion. Other teaching contrary to Kingdom teaching creates conflict in the establishment of the Kingdom of God. All theological teaching should ultimately point to the Kingdom of God. The church's ultimate purpose for existence is teaching and bringing to fruition the establishing of the Kingdom of God. Our salvation is intertwined with our accessing the Kingdom of God; understanding that the Kingdom resides in each believer; and finally, waiting patiently for the return of Christ.

God inhabits his Kingdom day and night; today and all tomorrows. Here and now and what lies ahead is always about the Kingdom of God. When the Kingdom of God has come I believe that it will resemble our many visions of the 'beloved community.' There will be so more sin and we will be living in perfect harmony with God, and with each other.

Having said all of this we can surmise why the issue of reconciliation may not have been accomplished in the church or among the people. We have moved very far from the original teachings of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Many concepts and teachings are long forgotten and recognized even by senior clergy. I reviewed numerous books on the Bible and religion that were published in the very early nineteen hundreds.

It appears from these writings that the church and the world had a better grasp on the teachings and the application of the Bible and especially “Kingdom Principles” than we have today. It appears that we have replaced teaching Kingdom principles with other programs and initiatives such as diversity, multiculturalism and tolerance.

Many of the biblical writings that I reviewed from the early nineteen hundreds seemed to have had many themes in common. This reading of earlier publications allowed me to see how far we have moved from the originals teachings of Christ, especially from the Kingdom Principles. There is no comparison in the “diluted and watered down” prosperity and individualism teachings of today as opposed to the dynamic Kingdom principles taught earlier in our history. I observed in particular their stances on racial hatred.

We have in the United States of America a tremendous preoccupation with race. I have not seen it on display in any other country as it is in America and American media. Race is on display so much so that there is often purported to be “two Americas” (white America and everyone else). In general the ideas (old and new) that I have read regarding the causes of racism appear to be fairly similar:

- Racism and preferences are not natural born phenomena but are taught and/or learned.
- The primary causes of racism were deemed to be differences in civilization, economics, and politics, feelings of superiority and/or inferiority and international influences.
- The recognition that Christianity (God’s Kingdom) is, has been and forever will be at war with the kingdom of evil. The strategic importance of racial hatred as

the weapon of choice for the antichrist was emphasized with great warning. It is considered the best weapon that the enemy has and he has used it successfully historically in a way that he could not do with any other weapon. I personally believe that music is also one of the weapons of the kingdom of evil and that it is highly used today.

- There will be accountability to God for every generation: for what they did do, did not do and what was left for subsequent generations to do. Judgment regarding injustice will be synonymous with measurable levels of privilege vs levels of responsibility.
- Groups that endorse and promote hatred must be openly condemned.
- God may very well be using racism as the Christian's test for entry into His Kingdom.

Biblical elders recognized that hatred invaded every aspect of daily living. They also knew that if this domination continued in America, we would be no different than other third world countries and that our democracy was doomed for failure. They also recognized that Christianity would be doomed as far as spreading the gospel into all the corners of the earth. What the early church fathers suspected may well be why America is no longer a nation of favor among the other countries of the world (and many say with God).

Our Christian democracy is not what we have articulated it to be. We have not lived what we have taught. What we have preached and attempted to teach others is not what we have done ourselves. Our talk did not match our walk and it has come to haunt

us. All indications from my reading are that the early church fathers studied God's Word. Then, they gave the people of God—the Word of God.

Scholarly and academic books and literature are generally not read by everyday people. And they are generally devoid of real life experiences. Many of our Pastors and clergy have no formal training with which to interpret or apply the information in scholarly and academic writings. There is an extreme scarcity of writings that point clearly and succinctly to Kingdom principles and how we teach and achieve them. It is learning and obeying Kingdom principles that will ultimately usher us into the presence of God and eternal life with God. It is knowledge and observance of these principles that make us one (or reconciled) to Him and one (reconciled) to our brother. Our great commission is to go and make disciples. Our greatest commandment is to love God. Our second greatest commandment is to love our brother. We show our love for God by how we treat our brother(s). The true nature of love is unselfish and sacrificial.

Love signifies the reciprocal affection of God and His people. Love provides the best concept of the very nature of God. God's love comes to us as mercy (Luke 1:50, Ephesians 2:4); as grace (Luke 2:14); kindness (Romans 2:4); long suffering (Romans 2:4, Psalm 3:20). There are many categories of love. The category to which we ascribe today is the Greek word *agape*, signifying a voluntary, active and unconditional love. Love is the evidence of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us and is also evidence of the fruit of the spirit.

1 John speaks of reciprocal and abiding love between us and the Father. The knowledge of God's love is a mandate or prerequisite to not only the ability to love, but also the ability to love others. God's nature is one of love; and to live in God, and God in

you is to live in love. The perfect love of God delivers us from fear, but not from the responsibilities of life. There are responsibilities associated with that love.

The antithesis of love for God is love for the world. “God is a jealous God, a consuming fire” (Deut. 4:24). James 4:5 and Ephesians 4:13 refer to a yearning in the Holy Spirit when Christians love the world more than they love God. John saw it as his mission to declare how much and to what effect “God loves the world” (John 3:16, 17:25).

If a man says he loves God, but hates his brother, he is a liar (1 John 2:9, 4:210). Love is expressed in actions and in deeds (James 1:27). God’s gift of redemption and salvation requires that we become witnesses and servants to all mankind. We become His representatives doing what He would do if He were here on earth. Redemption and salvation were given that we would “go therefore into the world” and bring others to Him. The greatest exposition that I have read on love was written by Paul.

Corinthians 13 New International Version (NIV)

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see

only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Those who know and have experienced the love and grace of God must facilitate the spread of this love throughout the world; in order that God's love might rule and reign in the world. Reconciliation begins with God (the ultimate and one true reconciliation) and is mandated by God. Because we can experience reconciliation to God, we should experience reconciliation to each other. Full and complete regeneration and reconciliation to God will mean "God's kingdom come, God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:11).

Regeneration: Required for Kingdom Membership

The concept of being "regenerated" or born again has historically been understood to happen once the individual makes a choice to become a believing member of the church. He or she is accepting the salvation that Jesus provided and is willing to follow Him on this journey. A public baptism is generally considered the outward symbol of an individual's decision to become a member of the body of Christ. After a new members class most new converts consider themselves on their way. The next steps are very dependent on the individual, church denomination and its doctrines. How are we regenerated? And what do we teach about the process?

A general theological definition of regeneration is being born of God accompanied by a definite change in one's spirit, in conjunction with and promulgated by the Holy Spirit after one recognizes his sinfulness, is repentant and pursues a path of holiness and right living. This spiritual change has traditionally been connected by the outward display of baptism. Titus 3:4-5 says that "when the kindness and love of Jesus

Christ appeared in our lives, in His mercy and thru rebirth and washing, He saved us. In His grace He justified us so that we might become joint heirs and also have the hope of eternal life.”

Spiritual life can only come from a spiritual source. And of course man has not that source in and of himself. John 3:3-6 says that “except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God; except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Marvel not that I say to you that you must be born again.” Man is changed from his ordinary way of seeing the world to seeing the world as God sees it. He hates what God hates and love what God loves. Romans 8:7-8 tells us that the ‘bent’ of the will is naturally away from God; and that the love of the world and self-seeking principles are represented in God’s place. Only supernatural Divine power can effect this spiritual change.

The scriptures tell us that the Holy Spirit effects this spiritual regeneration in only one way: the Word of God. Psalms 119 and 19:7 both speak of the saving, cleansing, converting and sanctifying power of the Word of God. Luke 8:11 says that the Word is the seed of the Kingdom. “Sanctify them in the truth, thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Many other passages substantiate that conversion, sanctification and regeneration are all connected with the Word (Eph. 1:13, Col. 1:5, James 1:18). We don’t know how God deals with the soul. But His Word says that He does, and we see the outward change in individuals so affected by the Word. I believe that based on my personal encounter with God we go through several stages. I have described this personal encounter in this way:

The soul *awakens* to the presence of God in your life. We are suddenly aware of spiritual things in a way that we were not before. We recognize this awakening and the

new awareness as something different and as something spiritual. Ephesians 5:14 - 15 says it this way: “For it is light that makes everything visible. That is why it is said: Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. Be very careful then, how you live, not as unwise, but wise.” Paul is stressing here what happens to us when we encounter the light of God and the effect it has on us. The spiritually dead come to life. His spirit breathes life into our spirits and we are awakened to goodness and light.

I was then *convicted* in and by my conscience of things I had done and things I had not done. Acts 16:29 -30 says: “The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’” There is a way of salvation that is available to us. We need only ask God and He will show us that way.

I began to think about what things in my life that I needed to change or view differently. David’s Psalm 51 of lament became one of my preferred ways to express my sorrow or repentance for anything I had done. Conversations, words and actions all received second thoughts and it mattered to me in my heart and in my spirit the effect that each of them had. If the effect was good, I felt good in my spirit. If the effect was not good, even if I was not sure why, I did not feel good. I am thankful for God’s continuing mercy during seasons when I miss the mark.

My life changed in the Lord (growing in the knowledge of who He was and who I had become). I had attended church and been active all of my life. My grandfather and uncle were both preachers of the gospel. I yearned to know more, to go deeper in understanding. John 16: 13-15 says

But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.....He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you....All that belongs to the Father is mine.

I had the grace of God, His Son Jesus and His Holy Spirit present in my spirit and in my life. I believed that with them I could manage whatever I encountered. I could do all things (even return to school) because of the source of my strength.

I had also begun to work with a rural women's project in the black belt of Alabama, the delta in Mississippi and rural areas in Georgia. I saw the yearning and longing of these women to escape poverty and to do more with their lives and more for their children. I would always tell them civil rights history and personal stories, but I realized each time that I left that it was not enough. They needed more to hold on to. I wanted to give them more so I applied and was accepted to Divinity School. This allowed me to accurately and hopefully share with them the message of the gospel. They accepted and responded to me in a way that allowed me to know that God had a plan for me and for them and was at work in everything we did.

My *will changed* and I was renewed and fully persuaded by the Holy Spirit of everything that I read in the gospel. I wanted to learn as much as I could and do as much as my gifts allowed. I believe that everything that had already happened in my life was preparation for what I was now being called to do. The painful and the exciting had all been instruments that would render me ready for whatever God had in store. I was ready and I was willing. John 6:44 says that "no man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." God's drawing me started much earlier, but I had now responded and so did God.

I had always lived a fairly disciplined life but now it became even more so. God then enabled me to look to Him with great faith for everything needed to do whatever He

called me to do. Ephesians 4:16 says that “From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Under God’s direction and through the study of His Word, I grew spiritually in ways I never knew until circumstances allowed them to be made manifest to me. I developed the gift of encouragement, listening and counseling. This was one that I recognized immediately. But God has blessed me with other gifts. I am a member of the body of Christ which has many members. I praise God for this body.

The last stage of my personal encounter with God was an encounter of *surrender*. There comes a point in life when we grow weary of trying to do things our way, and we finally acquiesce or *surrender* to God’s way. I was reminded as I wrote of this personal encounter of the stages of breast cancer. I am a cancer survivor and felt as though I encountered God spirit to spirit during this time. The first stage is denial, and there are many other stages in between. But the last stage is surrender. You understand finally that God is sovereign and operates in His sovereign will. You understand this now in a way that wasn’t really clear to you before.

James 4:14 says that our life is just a “mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.” You are a mere mortal, totally dependent upon the love, grace and tender mercies of God. The Psalmist says that we receive new, fresh and tender mercies from God each morning. Surrendering to God means reconciling ourselves to His will and His way. Reconciliation means that nothing in our lives is intentionally in conflict with God. The elders sang songs that reflected this new stance in life “the things I use to do I cannot do – anymore.” 2 Corinthians 5:17 says “if any man is in Christ, He is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold, they become new.” Nothing is the way it used to be

when we lay our burdens down. We lay them at the foot of the cross and trust God for everything.

There are personal disciplines that I believe we must individually develop to enable the new man to become spiritually developed and to have the spiritual character needed to cope with the affairs of the world and to become an ambassador for Christ. This list is in no way meant to be complete. But the disciplines listed are the disciplines I identified as most “spiritually anchoring” on my spiritual journey. The beginning recommended disciplines are love, prayer/meditation, obedience, lament, forgiveness, humility and reconciliation. I would start with these as a new Christian and “discipline” myself in each one. Becoming disciplined in these areas will provide a strong basis for living the “Kingdom” life as reflected in the Beatitudes, the Parables and the numerous teachings of Jesus in the gospels.

Love is the most obvious discipline. Clearly we cannot be ambassadorial if we do not see people as God sees them. Or more importantly love them as God loves them. The world’s initial and ultimate example and teaching on love is found in John 3:16 which describes God’s “perfect sacrifice” of His Son given to us in exchange for eternal life with Him. God did this because He loves us, His creation. Every single one of us has the same chance to claim without favoritism this “gift.”

Love God, love yourself and love others. We are called to love the unlovable. This is how people really know what love is; when we love without hesitation the unlovable. God is love. God’s love is symbolized through reciprocal love of God’s people to each other. 1 John 2:5 says that we can witness “the perfected love of God in

the visible display of those who love each other and keep God's commands." This love is unconditional and is called *agape* love.

I have found that unless a personal encounter is grounded in *agape* love, and is visible and perceived in the spirit of the one being approached - we likely will not reach the inner spirit of the individual. There must be a spirit to spirit connection if the connection is to become a successful ambassadorial encounter. I have travelled many places and met many people, and I can and do bear witness to the fact that whatever you are saying or doing must be perceived by the recipient as "a personal and spiritual connection" that has been made. The "unconditional" element of your love must be visible.

Prayer and meditation are communing with God. The songwriter Joseph Scriven tells us: "Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."¹⁸ What a privilege we have been given to commune with God in prayer, knowing that He hears us and will answer us. Prayer is our opportunity to cast all of cares upon Him. Prayer is our opportunity to thank Him and praise Him. Prayer is our time to say how much we love God and His Son.

Prayer is a mark of God's people and is a key component of our human-divine relationship. Quiet reading, meditation and prayer should become a routine staple in the life of the Christian. Hebrews 4 says that prayer allows us access to the throne of grace. Hebrews 7 says that as we pray Jesus is always there with the Father interceding on our behalf. Romans 8:26 says that the Holy Spirit assists us or intercedes for us as we don't know what we should pray for. Thank God for the privilege of prayer.

¹⁸ "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," (song), lyrics by Joseph M. Scriven (1855); music by Charles C. Converse (1868).

Obedience is “better than sacrifice,” says 1 Samuel 15:22. Obedience conveys a totally surrendered life to God. I listed surrender in the characteristics of regeneration. But we are living a surrendered life only if we are obedient to the word and commands of God. We are completely committed to God and to the goals of the common good. We are giving up all that we have for the cause of Christ and others. Obedience plays a fundamental role in a surrendered life to Christ.

Our blessings come through obedience: “I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:17-18). Obedience represents a proper relationship to God. Our love for God, our desire to be blessed and our desire for a proper relationship with God (as He has defined it) should be foremost in our spirit as we seek the highest level of obedience.

Noah was an excellent biblical model of simple but powerful obedience. In the absence of information, Noah did everything that he was told. The blessings for his obedience extended to him and his family. Jesus’ love for the Father was defined and observed in every word and deed. Even in death we hear Jesus say “not my will, but thine be done” (Matthew 26:39). John 14:15 says “if you love me, you will obey my commandments.” If we love God, we obey God. The two major commandments are to love God, and our neighbor as ourselves. These are the relationship dynamics that God intended for us with Him and with each other.

I believe that when I am speaking to an audience or to individuals about the painful and horrific events through which I lived in the sixties, a *spirit of lament* evolves.

Lament can mean to mourn or to express sorrow. Lament may speak to dismay or despair. And we may lament a sin that has been committed against God or another. Lament may arise in the onset of life's problems, attack by our enemies, illness, sin or some other form of attack against us or our bodies. There are many 'Lament Psalms' included in the book of Psalms (3, 4, 13,22,44,74, etc.). The Psalmist voices his lament or problem or complaint. The Lament Psalms generally include in any order these elements: invocation, lament, petition, statements of confidence in God and vows to praise God.

Lament assumes that a wrong has been committed and that God can be trusted to bring justice to the situations of the righteous. A prayer of lament to God tells Him how we believe we have been mistreated, and we trust that God will get justice for us. The prayers of the righteous avail much, especially prayers that are according to His will. We must always try to be in righteous standing before God.

There are over 100 references to *forgiveness* in the Bible. Forgiveness is important for us individually as well as for those we interact with in life. Forgiving allows us remove the variance between us and the individual. Matthew 6:12, 14-15 says that God forgives us as we forgive others. This is one of the ethical teachings of Jesus and carries with it a high standard. We all want to be forgiven. But we are sometimes reluctant and slow to forgive those that have offended us. God is good and forgiving to all who call on him (Psalms 86:5).

Luke 1:77-78 speaks of the forgiveness of our sins through the tender mercies of God. Psalm 51 is David's Psalm of lament for his sin. He prays for God's forgiveness and reflects that ultimately all sin is against God. This prayer for forgiveness is considered by many as the model penitent prayer for forgiveness. We know from our heart when we

should pray for forgiveness. God is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness when we ask (2 Chron. 33:12-13). We must practice the discipline of forgiveness. Forgiveness carries with it an ethic, a standard that measures forgiveness to us to the same extent that we have practiced forgiveness with others.

Humility is an attribute that allows us to maintain self-esteem as we abandon ourselves sacrificially to those who may need us. We may be considered great and we may have accomplished great things, but we see ourselves as small in the grand scheme of God's creation. James 4:14 reminds us that "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." Psalms 45:4 says "humility reflects Godly character." "False humility comes from the ungodly who have no place in heaven" (Col. 2:18). Humility is always the proper posture before God and others. "Humiliating others is a sin" (1 Cor. 11:22). Genuine humility allows the strong to serve the weak. Humility knows its worth, but is still willing to sacrifice for the common good.

Reconciliation to God and reconciliation to our brothers are both biblical imperatives and is represented in the ethical teachings of Jesus. Here, we explore what it means to embrace reconciliation as a discipline. We explore here what it means to embody or be the embodiment of reconciliation. I believe that all of us have natural and spiritual longings for peace, or a longing to be at peace with whomever we encounter. I also believe that if you have been regenerated (or reborn) it (God's peace) is the nature of who you become. There is something in your spirit that wants to love and be at peace with everyone. So we make every attempt to live peaceably with all whom we encounter.

We acknowledge the Kingdom of God each time that we pray The Lord's Prayer. We find the greatest expression and exposition of the character of the Kingdom in three places: The Lord's Prayer, The Beatitudes (or Sermon on the Mount) and The Parables. Each is a phenomenal tool for teaching about the Kingdom of God.

The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6: 9-13

⁹Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
¹⁰Your Kingdom come, Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.
¹²Give us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors.
¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Many of us pray the Lord's Prayer every day, but have never examined carefully and spiritually the wording. The Lord's Prayer was given to the disciples as a model to use when praying. We therefore believe that God hears our prayer because the example was given by God Himself as the model prayer. This prayer contains six petitions: three relating directly to God and three that pertain directly to the individual offering the prayer.

Verse nine acknowledges that God is the Father of all mankind. "Our Father" acknowledges that we are praying as a member of a Christian brotherhood. Believers are all privileged to call Him Father. He resides in heaven, and that His name is holy (or hallowed) as God is holy. We maintain hallowedness as well by protecting His name from false doctrines and unholy living. Through maintaining this hallowedness we hope to be enabled as His followers to preach, defend and convert.

Verse ten acknowledges that God's Kingdom is already here but that we are praying for the full arrival or consummation of His Kingdom here on earth; the time when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Each of us by appropriating His

will daily (doing His will) can speed up the day of the Kingdom appearing on earth just as it is in heaven. Heaven and earth are subject to the will of God.

Verse eleven asks God to provide for our needs each day. Not for the month or year, stockpiling, but for each day. This line acknowledges that we realize that each day we awaken, each day we work, each day we live and move and have our being is provided by God. We are praying for the daily needs of others as well. This fact is easily forgotten as our resources, opportunities and blessings multiply. It is a true test of faith to trust God for our needs, day by day.

Verse twelve requests that God forgive us our moral debts, sins or transgressions that we have committed. At the same time we are acknowledging His biblical imperative that we forgive others just as we want Him to forgive us. This is one of God's reciprocal ethical teachings. Our forgiveness to others is the real basis for God's forgiveness to us. God's forgiveness of us is earned by our own forgiveness to others. We pray as a body of intercessors for the forgiveness of all.

Verse thirteen acknowledged that we have trials, temptations and/or testing in this life each day. But we pray that the trials do not exceed our ability to withstand our abilities to always remain faithful to Jesus and the teachings of Jesus. The prayer is also that God will "spare us" or "save us" from any trial, temptation or test from which we are unable to save ourselves. We pray that God not allow us to develop a false sense of security, self-doubt and other worldly characteristics that impede or compromise our earthly journey.

The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5, 6

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' first sermon outlining the expectations or principles and rules of for members of His Kingdom. The sermon contains three types of admonitions:

- The Beatitudes (or declarations of blessedness) 5:1-12
- Admonitions on ethical living (5:13-20; 6:1-7:23)
- Contrasts between Jesus' ethical teaching and Jewish legalistic traditions (5:21-48)

The sermon ends with a parable emphasizing the importance of living and practicing the things that Jesus had taught (7:24-27). Also Psalms 1-2 are also reflections of the contents of the Beatitudes. The standard that Jesus gave in the sermons is a high standard to keep. Many say they are impossible. But nothing is impossible with Jesus' help. No doubt He knew that we could not uphold the standards alone. That is why He set the bar high knowing that we would require His presence to actually be successful.

The Parables: Jesus explains the Kingdom of Heaven using Parables

Jesus saw the need for the parables because they addressed matters and issues that were not a normal part of the acquired learning during that time. Teachings that were accepted and understood in that time were primarily those associated with the Law of Moses. Jesus unfolded in His teachings the mysteries and secrets of the Kingdom. Jesus had explained that the things of the Kingdom were not of this world (John 18:36). Jesus also explained in the story of Nicodemus (John 3: 1-21) that except a man be regenerated (or born again of the Spirit), he could not enter into this Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of heaven was a spiritual Kingdom of relationship to God - and of relationship to our brothers. God is a Spirit and believers can only worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:23). The choosing of the Kingdom of God always means the denial of

the earthly kingdom. The Kingdom of God ultimately is in each of us. Kingdom membership includes the cross. In order to assist listeners in better understanding the spiritual principles of the Kingdom of God, Jesus used examples that were unrelated to the things of the world.

The parables seemed to have been a popular way for Jesus to teach about the Kingdom of God. Stories that “meet us” where we are, and can be applied to every generation with applicable and purposeful meaning, are the heart of the parables. They represent about one third of Jesus’ teachings and are the basis for His ethical teachings of the Kingdom of God (Matthew, Mark and Luke). They are an effective tool for understanding the requirements for entering the Kingdom of Heaven, and allow us to see ourselves and windows to see ourselves and God. Parables assist us in discovering, knowing and doing the will of God and provide a “moral compass” for us. Matthew 13:11 begins with the “The Kingdom of Heaven.” The character of the Kingdom, Jesus and those who will be allowed to enter the Kingdom is presented. According to Matthew 13:10-17, 13:34-35, the purpose of the Parables is to reflect judgment or salvation; hinder or stimulate understanding; harden or awaken the heart of the hearer; the fulfillment of prophecy, such as Psalm 78:2 (Matthew 13:34-35)

Summary

The eventual attainment of the Kingdom of God is the central message of the Bible. Jesus’ ethical teachings were based on the doctrine of the Kingdom of God. I believe that if the doctrine is taught and applied, we will have the world that God intended for us from the very beginning of creation. However, I believe it is also important to emphasize to our audiences that God has not provided exceptions or options for this doctrine. I believe it is honest to say that the church Jesus founded is not

replicated in the churches we see today. The Kingdom of God on earth (i.e. our churches) was intended as our “waiting room” until Jesus’ return.

The Kingdom of God was established to provide fellowship for each of us as believers on earth, and to assist us in the ongoing fight with the kingdom of evil. God’s Kingdom has been superseded and replaced with the individual church doctrines and dogma. In general church doctrines point more to an eschatological Kingdom as opposed to “God’s Kingdom come” here on earth. The loss of the teaching of the Kingdom doctrine has had far reaching and compelling consequences for God’s church. We can expect to see our ‘beloved community’ and ‘lions walking with lambs’ only if we believe and understand the Kingdom doctrine, which is also reflected in The Lord’s Prayer, The Sermon on the Mount and The Parables.

So much of our effort is directed toward varying types of maintenance of the church and church programs that we have forgotten about the souls of our brothers and sisters. Bible study and teaching has been lost and swallowed up in the agenda of the church. This is clearly reflected in various segments of society today and in man’s treatment to man. Making the church the standard rather than the Kingdom of God leaves no room for biblical and Godly correction. The church’s standards vary and are separate and distinct from the Kingdom standards. The churches are subject individually to either denominational or individual pastoral oversight. Man’s church theology is the architect for most of the churches we see today.

The Kingdom of God should be alive, an exciting reality to all who encounter it. Our individual redemption as well as the redemption of the social order should be the primary focus of God’s church. It should be the overarching idea of biblical teaching,

preaching and all theology. Any teaching or doctrines that conflict with Kingdom teachings should be removed. I believe that this is how we re-structure and reclaim our churches (and God's people) by teaching and preaching the Kingdom doctrines that God intended. The Kingdom doctrine is God's supreme purpose on earth. We cannot understand God without the Kingdom, nor understand the Kingdom without God. Evil will always be with us. But the Kingdom of God doctrine exists first and foremost for the purpose of the establishment of God's Kingdom.

The purpose of the church is to create that Kingdom on earth. The church is not separate and distinct from the Kingdom of God. It is not an independent entity. They should both be one and the same. If the church is not of the Kingdom of God, then the church is of this world. The church is no longer redeeming God's creation; but is in fact in need of redemption itself. The Kingdom of God is not limited by the activities of the church. The Kingdom of God exists for every aspect of our daily living. Jesus walked the earth and encountered all that we encounter. He knew what we would need to sustain and protect us. In teaching accurately and appropriately the Kingdom doctrine we will at minimum give individuals and opportunity to hear, and choose. This is what I believe God calls us to do. This is God's message for delivery by His ambassadors. It is the responsibility of all believers, called Christians in honor of the walk that we share in His name.

Finally, reconciliation to God is achieved when we teach and live the teachings of the Kingdom doctrine. I believe that there is one true and final reconciliation and that one is to God. In our single minded obedience to Him, we are able to be reconciled to all people and circumstances around us, as we are mandated to do. Reconciliation impacts

every aspect of our daily lives. I do not believe we would have received the mandate if it were impossible to accomplish. We discipline ourselves and our spirit by reading His word daily, and again – by single-minded obedience. The way has already been prepared. Let us – called by God – teach the way.

Three Sermons Developed With a Reconciliation Theme

Sermon 1: The first sermon in its original form preached on reconciliation.

Title of Sermon: A Happy Ending

Text for Sermon: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21KJV)

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new.

¹⁸ And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though Christ did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

²¹ For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Sermon

All of us love a story with a happy ending. Such stories are generally rich in emotion and they appeal to a deep-seated longing that we all have to be at ONE with each other and with God. One well known biblical story with a happy ending is the story of Joseph and his brothers as told in Genesis Chapters 37-40. The brothers sold Joseph into slavery because of their jealousy, and their perception that their father loved Joseph more than them. They hated Joseph. This was a true case of sibling rivalry.

But years later when the brothers were re-united during famine and difficult times, Joseph—by this time had earned a position for himself with Pharaoh and reassured his brothers that what they meant for evil—God had used for good. There was no anger or hate in Joseph's heart. Joseph was reconciled to God and the providential nature of God. He came to understand that “all things work together for the good of them who love

God and are called according to God's purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Joseph and his brothers had a restored relationship. This was a story of reconciliation. This story had a happy ending.

The word reconciliation is not an Old Testament word and does not appear in the gospels. There is however, a motif (or recurring dominant theme or pattern) of restoration prominent throughout the Old Testament. Restoration implies a receiving or giving back of something that was taken or lost. We see this restoration happening on a national level in the OT. The pattern is always one of:

- Recognition of SIN
- Genuine Repentance
- God's Restoration

All of the prophetic books of the Bible call for the nations to repent from their sins and be restored (i.e. reconciled) back to obedience and favor with God. Sin is characterized in the Old Testament and the New Testament as a metaphoric death which (after genuine repentance) leads to new birth or renewal. This renewal or restoration is a highly visible pattern that we see also in the ethical teachings of Jesus and is built on the foundation of God's forgiveness of sinners.

Paul the author of the text in this letter to the church at Corinth (Corinthians 1, 2) is the only New Testament writer to use the word reconciliation. In Paul's writings God is always the reconciler. God did not need to be reconciled to Man. Man needed to be reconciled to God—because of his sin. Romans 8:7 says that the mind of the flesh is enmity (deep seated hatred, hostility or antagonism) against God. The origin of this sin is recorded in the book of Genesis.

Let's examine today's text: 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21 from three perspectives regarding reconciliation:

1. The message
2. The motive
3. The ministry

What is reconciliation? And what was *the message* of the reconciliatory that Paul spoke?

The Greek word for reconciliation when used as a verb is *Katallaso*. When referencing money – reconciliation means to change or exchange. When referring to people – it means to change from hatred or ill will to a peaceful co-existence. We are reconciled to God when we peacefully co-exist with God in the light of His Word. It means that nothing in our lives is deliberately or intentionally contrary or antagonistic to the word, nor therefore the will of God.

Obedience is how we show our love for Him and for all of His creation. Psalm 119 says “blessed are those who are blameless, who walk according to the law of His word, who keep His statutes, who seek him with all their heart. How can a young man be pure? Hide God's Word in your heart that you may not sin against God.”

What is the message of reconciliation? One man died for all of us (John 3:16). That puts us all on equal footing. He included all of us in His death, so that we might all also be included in His life, a resurrected life. The old life is gone. Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. God brought us back—to himself through Christ. Now new life has come. Ephesians 2:5 tells us that we have been saved and restored to fellowship through the grace of God. And all of this is a gift from God.

Example of Christmas: Kmart & Wal-Mart layaways were paid off by an anonymous person. Someone else legally assumed the debt. It was a gift to those from whom the debt was due. They could now start over or begin again. But the debtors had to come and receive the word that they no longer owed anything. No doubt there was some who did not show up to receive the gift, fearful they could not pay what was required. Now this giver preferred to remain anonymous. Only Christ is not anonymous.

We know who paid the debt for us. And we know that we could never have paid what was due. But like these customers you must claim the gift that has been given to you. Faithfully showing up and acknowledging receipt of the gift resulted in a happy ending for the majority of the layaway customers.

Romans 5:10 says “For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by His life.” Our reconciliation to Christ is a command to us; and is functionally synonymous to our reconciliation to each other. We cannot be reconciled to Christ - if we are not reconciled to each other. We cannot be reconciled to each other - if we are not reconciled to Christ.

1 John 4:20-21 asks the question: “For how can we love God whom we have not seen and hate our brother whom we see every day?” This is still a relevant question today. The gospel of John says that this is not possible.

1 Corinthians 8:12 says “that sin committed against our brother is sin against God.” Ultimately, all sin is against God. We may sin one brother at a time or collectively against groups of people, but the result is the same. What we are witnessing today in our world is a snapshot, a picture of a society that has not fully reconciled to God.

In his speech “Where do we go from here”? Martin King told us that there were three evils which formulated the basis of all of our societal troubles and that we must constantly work or strive against them.

As a young girl I struggled tremendously with the dark and difficult events in Birmingham against the backdrop of biblical teaching. We cannot be religious and racist simultaneously. We must be one or the other. But racism isn’t just black against white. Racism has many formulas. Our country has a tremendous preoccupation with race. Twenty-four hours per day and seven days per week the media and seemingly everyone else are focused on race.

- Look at the statistical data on race of the Federal Government and the Southern Poverty Law Center. The SPLC says that a racist crime is committed every minute of every 24 hour day.
- We are more culturally diverse today in the U.S than in any period in our history.

Many groups are feeling very uncomfortable about that. Seemingly there are groups within every country who feel that it is their manifest destiny to control the destiny of everyone else. Someone or some groups are always marginalized, living on the periphery. When the success of one group is dependent upon the domination, holding down of another group – the failure of the dominant group is inevitable. An unreconciled individual, society or world hold frightening, unconscionable possibilities:

This is the story of the Holocaust: by Helmut Walser Smith. Smith chose to focus on the humanity (or lack of) of the perpetrators.

Crimes perpetrated

- Systematic killing of millions of Jews in Germany
- Shooting into mass graves

- Death by poisonous gassing in showers
- Starvation and other cruel treatment

Humanity of perpetrators

- Ate breakfast with family every day
- Patted the dog
- Took the children to school
- Took family vacations and maintained their homes. Seemingly normal in every sense of the word normal, but clearly not reconciled to God.

God has not given any of us rights to distribute to others. He has not given any individual or any group control of everyone else. “The earth is the Lord’s, the fullness thereof, the world, they that dwell therein” (Ps. 24:1).

Authentic racial reconciliation would mean that we love everyone with the love of Christ, the Greek *agape* or “un-conditional form of love.” It means that we have learned to see others as Christ sees them.

Poverty – We had the means in the 1960s and today to alleviate poverty and suffering.

Dr. King asked “Do we have the will?”

- U.S.A - Over 50 million in the U.S.A. living in poverty and without health insurance, the greater majority of these being children
- Abroad -- India – people living in cardboard boxes

But if we were living in a reconciled world, no one would be hungry. There would not be lack in any household.

War - There are men in the world who delight in war. But Isaiah 2:4 says one day we will not train for war any more.

U.S wars of recent have brought with them:

- the horrors of maiming and crippling both physically and mentally and scores of homeless veterans
- loss of thousands of lives
- continuous striving by some for military industrialization: (those who would profit from) the evils of war

Dr. King indicated that racism, poverty and war were interdependent. Much like our horizontal & vertical relationships with God and our brothers, one cannot exist without the other (Matt. 5:25). God does not want our gifts if we have not love for our brother. For the second greatest commandment is “To love our neighbor as ourselves. Love does its neighbor no harm” (Rom. 13: 9-10). Our first is to Love God with all of our heart and soul.

We find that in many churches and on many tele-vangelistic programs there is a feverish and dominant theme in preaching about the second coming of Christ. Emory University theologian Fred Craddock might say that we talk about what’s coming in the future so that we can ignore the implications of Christ’s first coming, the implications of how we should be living today.

We refuse to live “righteously” (in right standing with God) in the moment of today. We refuse to acknowledge and live what we already know, have already been taught. The world has not yet learned to live next door to someone who is different from them. But God’s key Word is still love - and love carries with it a mandatory requirement of relationship.

Theologian Dr. Howard Thurman says that reconciliation is a discipline of the spirit. Just as we must discipline ourselves to pray, to love, to suffer—so too we must

learn to discipline ourselves toward reconciliation to God and to man. Brothers and sisters - Christ – is coming back. We won't have the privilege of practicing when God returns nor in heaven. All of us want our story to have a happy ending.

The message is simple: Get in right standing with God. Be reconciled to God. Be reconciled to your brother. One is a requirement and a function of the other.

Now, what happens if we don't? The author of Hebrews in 10:30, 31 says:

God is a God of justice. "Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord. I will repay. And it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The Motive –

In subsequent chapters of 2 Corinthians we see that Paul's character and calling are being called into question by those whom Paul calls "super Apostles." Paul was called a religious fanatic, one having visions, who received no compensation, and could write but could not preach. Paul was not one of the original 12 disciples called by Jesus. He had not walked and talked with Jesus as the other disciples had done.

So his apostolic title and authority and his preaching were bitterly contested by other so called religious leaders. But Paul says: you are looking at the outward things, not what is on the inside. But God does look on the inside. Acts 1:24 says He knows what is in all of our hearts.

I have often been guilty of trying to pass judgment based on outside appearance. Example of advice to Brandon: We can't just look at the outside. Amen.

Paul provides the following as his motives as a commissioned apostle and preacher of the gospel. I believe that Paul's motives ought to be our motives.

1. **All people are accountable to God.** (2 Cor. 5:10) God is their maker and their judge. Paul reminds us that we must all appear before the judgment seat.

Judgment seat translated as a noun in the Greek language is *bema* which actually means “to step”, “to set his foot on” or “foot room.” In the Greek court system each accuser was required to literally step up (on steps), and face his accuser. We will be required to step up and stand before our creator and our judge. Each Christian has an obligation to give an account of himself to God. Let me repeat this statement the way Matthew 12:36, Luke 16:2 and Romans 14:12 say it: We will all be required to give an account of ourselves - of the work we did in these earthly bodies. God’s judgment on each of us will be the result of His assessment of our works: whether they be good or bad. We must remember this in everything that we do.

2. **Paul loves the Lord.** He has a reverential awe for the sacrifice that Christ made on Paul’s and all of our behalf (John 3:16). It is this love for the Lord that compels Paul to do what He is doing. God’s love should compel each of us to want to do things for Him? Fully recognizing the sacrifice of Christ -Paul feels obligated and honored to share this good news with non-believers that they may become “new creatures” as well.
4. **Paul can testify to his own life changes.** He was a convert, a witness to the power of the gospel preached. Here is a person who went from persecuting Christians to preaching the gospel. He understood fully the power of the gospel because he himself has been redeemed, changed, sanctified. All of us have a testimony, every day that we awaken. Psalms 107:2 says that if you have been redeemed, you ought to say so. Paul was “sold out.” He said so. And it showed.

5. **The commission from the Lord.** Paul knew without doubt that God had called him to preach the gospel, to be an ambassador of reconciliation. Acts 9:10-19 records that this commissioning occurred at the home of Judas in Damascus shortly after the encounter with the risen Christ. Paul had the authority and Paul had the power. *Paul's motives ought to also be our motives as well.*
6. Finally, Paul speaks about the ministry which has been entrusted to him and to us: God has given us the responsibility, the ministry, as believers to lead others to be reconciled to Him. *God was in Christ*, reconciling us back to Him. We are now His ambassadors, making His appeal for Him. We speak for God when we say, “Be reconciled to God. Come back to God.” God has made Christ to be the offering for our sin so that we could be in right standing (be made righteous righteousness) in Christ.

I am – and you are - Ambassadors for the ministry of reconciliation. Those who have been reconciled now become the reconcilers. Reconciliation has been accomplished through Christ for believers, but is also a continuing work. God's reconciliation is timeless. Our job is to tell others that they need only accept what has already been achieved.

Ambassador used as a Greek noun is *presbes* and means elder, age or first in rank. In the United States we might use the word statesman. In the past and today an Ambassador represents the interest of his/her nation abroad. The ambassador does not have his own message. He does not create a message, nor does he change the message of the person who sent him. His message comes from the one in authority.

As believers we are ambassadors carrying the message of reconciliation as though it were Christ himself. As ambassadors for Christ we are helping to insure a happy ending when we are all reunited with Christ.

Summary:

The Message:

Simple and succinct. Be reconciled to Christ. Be reconciled to each other. They are interdependent. We cannot have one without the other.

The Motive:

Paul's motive and our motive:

- personal accountability to His maker and judge
- love for Christ for the sacrifices He made for us
- the power of the gospel that Paul has personally witnessed in his own life and in his preaching to others
- His commission, his power & authority from the Lord

The Ministry:

We are all called to be ambassadors. Tell everyone else that God has relieved us of debt and penalty through the sacrificial gift of His Son Jesus. As repentant believers we have had all rights and privileges fully restored. We need only to claim them. Jude 21-23 says "build yourselves up as we wait for the coming of the Lord. Be merciful to those who doubt. Snatch them from the fire and save them; to others show mercy." Like Paul, this is the ministry to which I have been called. For this ministry I have become a citizen of the world, an itinerant messenger of the gospel. For the cause of Christ, that I may be accountable, I have honored God's call.

Finally beloved Colossians 1:19 -22 says

¹⁹ For in Him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

²⁰ And through Him (Jesus) God was pleased to reconcile to Himself – all things on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross.

²¹ And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind doing evil deeds

²² And he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him –

²³ provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel you heard.

This text from Colossians lets us know that God's plan of reconciliation will one day be fully realized for heaven, earth and the entire universe. Our world will reflect the harmony and love that God originally intended.

Dr. MLK often referred to this time of harmony and love – as the attainment of the Beloved Community. Isaiah calls it a time of peace when lions will lay with lambs, and children will be able to lead us because - the whole world will be full of the knowledge of God. I call it “A Happy Ending.” Let's pray:

For all the times we have moved against your will;
For all of the ways we have been destructive;
For all of the people we have manipulated,
For all the truth we have denied;
For all of the deeds we have done in ignorance;
That which we have done that has harmed others,
Thereby harming myself,
These acts and thoughts we confess before God,
We acknowledge and we are sorry.
We pray for the strength to change those actions, thoughts
And words so that we can follow your path more faithfully.
God have mercy, Christ have mercy, God – have mercy. Amen.
(*Occasions of Prayer* – Lisa Withrow)

Sermon 2: The Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Title of Sermon: Who is my neighbor?

Text for Sermon: Luke 10: 25-37 (KJV)

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher”, he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶“What is written in the law,” he replied? “How do you read it?”

²⁷He answered: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

²⁸“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰In reply Jesus said: “A man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

³²So, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him.

³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said. “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.”

³⁶“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Outline of Sermon

I. Introduction

Jesus is challenged by a Jewish lawyer on the requirements for receiving eternal life.

Jesus provides the two requirements and then receives a second question.

1. The first question:
2. How does one receive eternal life? (10:25-26)
3. Jesus provides two answers (10:27-28).
4. A second question is asked (10:19).

II. Jesus tells the parable (10:30-35).

1. A traveler journeys from Jerusalem to Jericho (10:30).
2. The traveler is attacked by robbers (10:30).
3. Who assists the traveler? (10: 31-35).

III. The lesson of the parable (10:36-37).

1. An answer to the second question is given (10:36-37).

Sermon

Many times in life we are asked questions by people who already know the answers. They either want to see if you know the answer or take note perhaps how you might explain the answer. They are either establishing your credibility, or their own. We eventually see that the question is not about a serious answer, but more about an evaluation of your response. The text says that a scholar well versed in the law approached Jesus, and asked “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Questions on eternal life were common questions during that time. We reflect on Matthew 22:35 where Jesus was previously questioned by an expert in the law. The expert in the law was asking questions about the law. And the assumption inherent in the question appears to be that human beings bear responsibility for their own salvation. It appears that he may have been looking for a “checklist” of things that one must do to inherit eternal life.

So Jesus asked him; “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” Jesus is referring him back to the Old Testament which was the ultimate source for biblical or “life” questions. The expert answered; “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself.” This answer in its essence represented and demanded two responses: a total devotion to God and loving our neighbor as ourselves. The ultimate test of whether we have treated our neighbors as ourselves will not come from us but will come from Jesus. Have we done all for them that we would have done for ourselves in the same circumstance? Jesus indicated that the response given was correct and one needed only to actively honor the response.

Answering correctly does not always indicate that we fully understand the implications of a response. Jesus' positive response to the law expert's answering correctly could also have been misinterpreted to mean that since the expert knew the law, he knew the correct answer and also his assumption about humans "earning" their way into the Kingdom was valid. I travelled to Ireland many years ago and spent time at Glenstall Abbey Benedictine Monastery. The monks told of Americans who came to their sanctuary looking to "buy prayers" from the monks, or burial plots on the Monastery property. They also made huge donations in the name of "doing good." They seemed to believe that there was no way they could miss eternal life and the Kingdom of God if they were prayed into heaven by the Monks and then buried on their property! The Kingdom of God resides in us. And when it does the Holy Spirit resides in us as well and brings to our remembrance all of the things of God (John 14:26).

Jesus' response was followed by a second question: Who is my neighbor? We remember that Cain asked a similar question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9). Luke 10:36 says a neighbor is a person in relation to another. This suggests that when we look in the mirror, the image we see—along with every other human being we see daily—is made in God's image with all having the same needs, rights, desires and hopes.

This question of who is my neighbor presented new challenges for me when Henry L. Gates was arrested by a policeman in his own home because a neighbor (of several years) thought that he was a stranger breaking into the home.¹⁹ Consider also the case of three women in Ohio who escaped from a kidnapper's house after being held

¹⁹ Melissa Trujillo, "Henry Louis Gates Jr. Arrested, Police Accused of Racial Profiling," *Huffington Post*, August 20, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/20/henry-louis-gates-jr-arre_n_241407.html (accessed February 20, 2015).

captive for 10 years, one even delivering a baby during captivity. And none of the neighbors noticed anything strange for 10 years!!²⁰ These stories really give new meaning to the question: If the neighbor isn't the person living next door, then who really is my neighbor? The story that Jesus tells provides an answer to life's ongoing question of "who is my neighbor?"

One final example of defining a neighbor is that of Renisha McBride, a 19 year old Detroit teenager involved in a car accident. She was not far from home, but it was after midnight so she walked to the nearest house that she could see. She knocked on the door of an unknown neighbor and was shot in the face through a front door that was still closed. She had walked from her car to the nearest house seeking help.²¹ My heart grieved for this teenager and her family. The chill of this story was that my daughter had a frighteningly similar experience when she visited New Jersey. But her story had a good ending.

I believe that God dispersed angels at two a.m. in the morning when she hit the guard rail on an expressway totaling her car and walking several miles to the nearest home she could find. The family called me and treated her as if she were their daughter. I believe that this is what God expects from each of His followers. There are numerous questions that one could ask, and numerous comments that could be made. But I will

²⁰ Jazmine Denise Rogers, "Ohio Man Rescues Three Kidnapping Victims Who Went Missing Over Ten Years Ago," *Huffington Post*, May 7, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/video/michigan-teen-renisha-mcbride-shot-killed-car-accident-20826426> (accessed February 20, 2015).

²¹ *Huffington Post*, "Renisha McBride, 19, Shot To Death On Metro Detroit Porch While Trying To Get Help, Family Says," *Huffington Post*, November 6, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/06/renisha-mcbride-detroit_n_4227760.html (accessed February 20, 2015).

suffice it to say again that new revelation is brought to all of us surrounding the question of “who is my neighbor” especially in the light of Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus tells the story of the man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. Bible scholars say that Jerusalem to Jericho is about 17 miles. Many locals avoided this road. The road was rugged and rocky and included travel through desert country where robbers could easily hide. There were many opportune places for one to be robbed. The man was beaten, robbed and had his clothes taken. A priest was later travelling the road, but when he saw the man, moved on quickly. Priests served in the temple and also offered sacrifices. Next a Levite passed the man and he too continued on quickly. Levites assisted in the maintenance of temple services and order. There is a clear absence of mercy in the first two travelers. We are not told why they did not stop. But the implication seems to be that there was not a legitimate reason.

The third person to see the man was a Samaritan. The Samaritan stopped and helped the man. He bandaged the man’s wounds using his own personal oil and wine for their healing and medicinal effects (reflected in Mark 6:13 and James 5:14). He then put the man on his donkey and took him to an inn. He paid 2 days wages which allowed the man two months of recuperation time. It is clear that there were sacrifices made by the Samaritan. He used his own money, donkey, wine and spirits. No doubt the journey to the inn was not part of his route. But he did everything that he could for the stranger. He did everything for the stranger that he would have wanted done for himself. These sacrificial actions translated into mercy for the injured man.

Jesus then inquired as to who was really a neighbor to the man? Which one of these men proved himself to be a good neighbor? The question was interesting as posed

because the priest (supposedly a man of God) did not stop. The Levite, a lay leader did not stop. Samaritans were considered foreigners and half breeds physically and spiritually (Matthew 10:5, John 4:20, 22) and were hated by the Jews. The Jews were openly hostile to the Samaritans. Jesus was making the point that love is not limited or relegated to those like us or those we know and like.

Love is not limited by its object of reception. Love does not limit itself in any way. Love does not do just enough to get by. Just as God did not limit His sacrifice and love for us, neither should we withhold godly *agape* love from those we encounter, especially when they are in need. The expert in the law told Jesus that the man who had mercy on the traveler was a good neighbor to him. Jesus said: “go and do likewise.”

The expansion of technology and communications as well as globalization has made being a neighbor more accessible than ever. We are reaching out via social media in addition to our traditional media to many people and many places. We are once again giving new responses to the question of who is my neighbor. God has blessed us and enabled us to reach far beyond where we are and to help people all over the world. As we reach out globally let us not forget our neighbors right here at home.

Poverty and homeless rates continue to rise. We are faced with unemployment and mass incarceration. There are many who need our assistance. Look for ways everyday to assist others and define neighbor in a new way. Let’s go beyond all boundaries at home. Let’s allow love to have its way without limits. In the name of Jesus, who gave all for us that we might have all, let us all find ways to reach out to our neighbors.

Brothers, let us come together
Walking in the spirit, there's much to be done
We will come reaching out from our comforts
And they will know us by our love

Sisters, we were made for kindness
We can pierce the darkness as He shines through us
We will come reaching with a song of healing
And they will know us by our love

The time is now, come church arise
Love with His hands, see with His eyes
Bind it around you, let it never leave you
And they will know us by our love

Children, you are hope for justice
Stand firm in the truth now, set your hearts above
You will be reaching long after we're gone
And they will know you by your love

The time is now, come church arise
Love with His hands, see with His eyes
Bind it around you, let it never leave you
And they will know us by our love

The time is now, come church arise
Love with His hands, see with His eyes
Bind it around you, let it never leave you
And they will know us by our love²²

We are the sisters that reach for the hurting
We are the brothers that fight for the weak
These are the hands that lead the world to Jesus
They will know us by our love, yes, know us by our love.²³

²² Christy Nockels, "By Our Love," *Miscellaneous*, <http://www.songlyrics.com/christy-nockels/by-our-love-lyrics/#JAAZt76tZj0xOWrq.99>.

²³ Moriah Peters, "Know Us by Our Love," <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/moriahpeters/knowusbyourlove.html>.

Sermon 3

Title of Sermon: Love Produces Love

Text for Sermon: 1 John 4:13-21KJV)

¹³ We know that we live in Him and He in us because He has given us of His Spirit.

¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in Him and He in God.

¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love that God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in Him.

¹⁷ In this way love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment because in this world we are like him.

¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹ We loved because He first loved us.

²⁰ If anyone say, "I love God", yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

²¹ And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Outline of Sermon

I. Introduction

John writes about our having love one for another.

II. Love proves love.

1. Our love for God
2. God's love for us

III. Love produces love.

1. We are conjoined with God.
2. We have confidence.
3. We have no fear.

Sermon

The word love is used 32 times in the scriptures from verse 7 through 21. John really emphasizes the importance of love and the visibility of that love. John suggests that only those who are really somewhat like God can know Him. God is love. The very essence of God's nature is one of love. Anyone that does not love does not know God. Again, God is love. We are reminded in John 4:24 that God is spirit and God is light (1:5). John also reminds us that no one has ever seen God. But we see His love when we love others and they love us.

His love is visible in the love we show each other. This enables us to see the God we cannot see, because we see His love expressed in others and they see His love expressed in us. We are able to show and express this love because God and His Spirit lives in us. God has given us His spirit. The love that we have for each other is a manifestation of God's Spirit which has been placed inside of us. The Spirit bears the fruit of love. The fruit and the tree are one and the same.

When we are able to love it signifies that God lives in us because God is the source of love. We are evil by nature but God's nature is one of love. The love in us is a sign that God's spirit abides in us. The love we have inside should make us confident of our salvation on the Day of Judgment. If we are like Him on earth we will still be like Him on the Day of Judgment. We are not afraid of God's judgment because His love lives in us and enables us to love as He loves. We are only able to love because God first loved us. He provided the example of love through the sacrifice of His only son for our transgressions. Genuine love is never self-generated by his creation on earth.

God has commanded us to love one another. John says it is impossible to love someone that we cannot see if we cannot love the one that we do see. We know nothing about what we cannot see. We only know about God if His spirit, and hence his love, resides in us. Knowing and loving God is a prerequisite to loving others. It is for these reasons that we are able to love.

The world should see the love of God reflected in those called by His name: Christians. A Christian should be:

- A mind through which God thinks
- A voice through which God speaks
- A hand through which God helps
- A heart through which God loves
- Imitators of Jesus

John repeats many times the ways in which “we may be sure” that we abide in God.
2:3, 2:5, 3:10, 3:14, 3:19
3:24, 4:2, 4:6, 5:2, 5:13

What does abiding in God look like in the daily actions of Christians?
Romans 3:8 and John 3:16

- Love for one another
- The spirit of God
- Abiding in love
- Reciprocity: Abiding in God and God in us
- Confessing and believing that Jesus is the son of God
- The tests of loving each other

Our goal in life should be to live as imitators of Jesus. Let others see Jesus’ love in you. Love is as love does. We thank God for His lessons in and for His love for each of us. Amen.

Let us pray,

Almighty and everlasting God, God of many names
God of heaven and earth and all mankind
God – by whose spirit all of your creation is governed and sanctified
God – in whom we live and move and have our being
In you we find love and compassion
In you we find holiness, goodness and gentleness, forgiveness and mercy.

May we always seek to mirror your image.
May we see you in all individuals and be reminded that you love all
people
No matter how we try to deny that love
In our thoughts and words and deeds.
Thank you for the beauty of all the earth and the diversity of all mankind.
Thank you for all of the ways you have gifted us to acknowledge the
beauty of both.
We pray that all nations and all mankind strive toward global peace
And eternal reconciliation with you and all of your creation.
We give honor and praise now to you for who you are
We give thanks for each individual present here today and pray that you
will guide and
Multiply our time together with wisdom, productivity and
accomplishment.
Keep us in your care and bless us we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER FIVE EVALUATION PROCESS

During the year of 2014 and the first months of 2015 I traveled to various cities and states to participate in various forums, churches, workshops, and town halls to deliver messages on reconciliation. I have included a timeline which shows the various dates and locations of my speaking engagements and the nature of the message delivered (see Appendix D). In May of 2014, I developed an online survey through Google forms and sent emails to one thousand recipients requesting that they complete the survey. The emails were sent to various locations including places that I had visited and spoken. The survey was also sent to several organizations with a minimum 25 people. I was able to identify and send the survey to approximately one thousand people based on my formula. All recipients were requested to complete the anonymous five minute survey as concisely as possible. I accepted responses to the survey through December 31, 2014.

This was a local survey and the respondents self-selected for completion. The survey contained fifteen questions. Nine questions were qualitative and six questions were quantitative. The quantitative responses are reflected with pie charts and percentages. I personally reviewed the results thoroughly, and also spoke with Dr. Harry Hamilton and Professor Chris Biga, both employed by the University of Alabama in Birmingham in the Social Science department. Both had experience in instruction and

designing of surveys, analyzing survey responses and various statistical data. Dr. Hamilton had conducted several personal projects centering on reconciliation. Dr. Biga indicated that with three to six months' notice, he could authorize three students (for academic credit) to run the related Excel spread sheet for my data and develop some comparison statistics. This information would deepen our level of understanding in terms of what individuals are thinking about reconciliation, and the best ways to move forward as we try to create the Beloved Community. I promised that I would return to follow up on that offer when classes resumed again in June. They were very positive regarding the 426 respondents and felt that overall it was a very "telling" and a positive survey.

I also spoke at length with my Site Team Chair (Dr. Shirley Richards) about the survey. We analyzed and discussed the survey for several hours. I have incorporated many of her suggestions in the summary and conclusion statements. It was incredibly helpful and even more revealing to have another academic "mind" assist in interpretation and summarization of the responses. Dr. Richards does many types of counseling. Many of the responses suggested "counseling" for individuals having "victim" or "perpetrator" issues with racism. I believe that counseling will be an immeasurable addition to the list of recommendations included in this study.

This survey was placed on line in May, 2014. December 31, 2014 was the last day that summarized data was printed from the responses. Dates were omitted without consequence to the survey results. Following are the questions that were asked in the survey, along with the top 15 or so responses for each qualitative question. Inclusion in the list of qualitative responses indicates that the response occurred at least 10 times (and was similarly framed in meaning) throughout the total responses to the survey question.

Quantitative responses are provided as percentage comparisons for the remaining questions. Overall, the responses were extremely positive and hopeful, and reflected varying levels of maturity in theological understanding and behavior.

Question 1: Please provide your state of residence.

22 states out of 50 were represented in the responses. They are listed below:

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|------------------|
| Alabama | Florida | Maryland | Rhode Island |
| Arizona | Georgia | Mississippi | Tennessee |
| California | Illinois | Missouri | Texas |
| Carolina | Kansas | New York | Washington, D.C. |
| Colorado | Kentucky | Ohio | |
| Connecticut | Louisiana | Pennsylvania | |

Question 2: Please provide your gender.

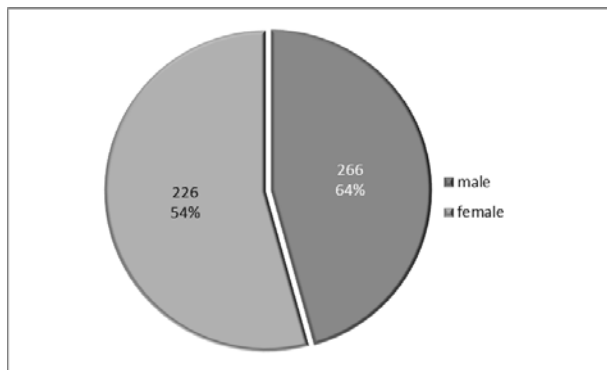


Figure 1: Question 2

- A total of 426 individuals responded to this survey.
- 190 males responded to this survey.
- 228 females responded to the survey.
- 8 individuals did not respond to this question.

Question 3: Please provide your age range.

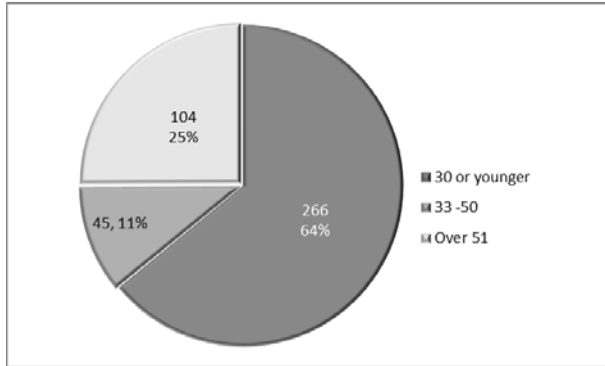


Figure 2: Question 3

- 30 or younger: 62% or 266 of the total responses.
- 33-50: 11% or 45 of the total responses

Question 4: Please tell us about your cultural identity.

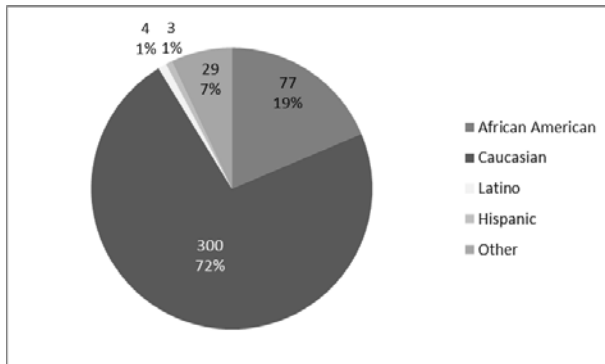


Figure 3: Question 4

- African American: 18% or 78 of the total responses.
- Caucasian: 71% or 301 of the total responses.
- Latino: 1% or 4 of the total responses.
- Hispanic: 1% or 3 of the total responses.
- Other: 7% or 29 of the total responses.

Question 5: Please tell us about your religious preferences.

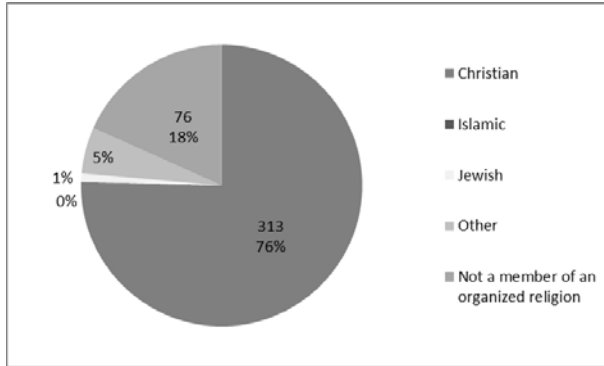


Figure 4: Question 5

- Christian: 74% or 315 of the total responses
- Islamic: 0%
- Jewish: 1% or 4 of the total responses.
- Other: 5% or 22 of the total responses.
- Not a member of an organized religion: 18% or 76 of the total responses.

Question 6: Please provide your definition of reconciliation.

- To bring people together after a falling away.
- Reconciliation is a commitment to understand and accept the truth about another
- Reconciliation is the act of grace and mercy to heal a moment or time of wrongdoing.
- Forgiving past wrongs
- To establish or re-establish a relationship, to become closer to God by asking for forgiveness and living a Christian life
- Intentional community understanding and conversation creating unifying activities and involvement opportunities
- To restore respect to a culture
- Restoring harmony between groups
- Reconciliation presupposes that a relationship is disturbed (vertical or horizontal). Reconciliation involves covenant breaking with God through deliberate sin, negligence or allowing evil to happen.
- To put aside grievances in favor of unity
- People coming together to seek and offer forgiveness for past and present offenses

- Coming together in forgiveness and love
- Engaging in discussion, no matter how uncomfortable, about the lingering effects of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and mass incarceration. Attempting to use my position of privilege to positively impact disadvantaged communities
- Forgiveness, love and tolerance
- To forgive and fix what was once broken in an emotional sense
- Forgiveness and change, the step after forgiveness to rebuilding relationships
- Forgive and go forward in mutual respect
- Reconciliation is agreement with God, acknowledgement of each person's humanity
- Blacks and whites coming together
- Reconciliation is a willingness and commitment to understand and accept true cultural, ethnic or spiritual differences between you and another.

Question 7: Do you believe in biblical reconciliation?

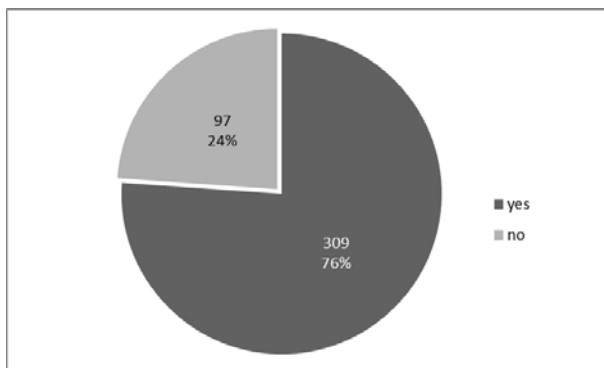


Figure 5: Question 7

- Yes: 73% or 310 responses of the total responses.
- No: 23% or 97 responses of the total responses

Question 8: I encounter reconciliation materials: sermons, lectures, books, etc.

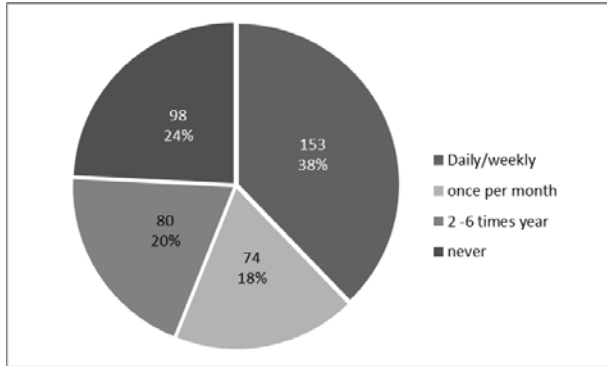


Figure 6: Question 8

- Daily/weekly: 36% or 154 responses of the total responses
- Once per month: 17% or 74 responses of the total responses
- 2-6 times per year: 19% or 81 responses of the total responses
- Never: 23% or 98 responses of the total responses

Question 9: Do you believe that racial reconciliation is achievable either now or in the next generation's lifetime?

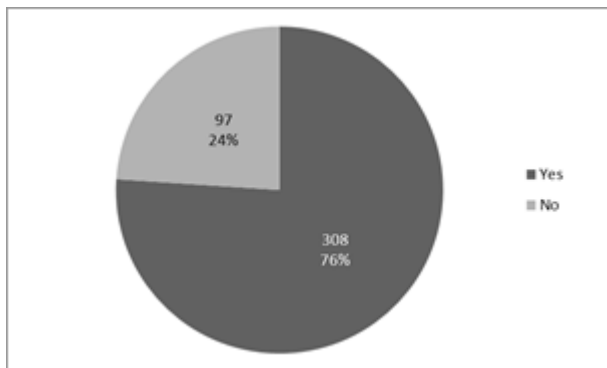


Figure 7: Question 9

- Yes: 73% or 310 responses of the total responses
- No: 23% or 97 responses of the total responses.

Question 10: What do you see as the primary obstacle or barrier to racial reconciliation?

- No acknowledgement that racism is wrong
- What people have been taught
- People cannot see past the past and don't want to move on
- Denial of its existence and refuse to discuss
- Ignorance/fear
- Ignorance/arrogance
- Hatred is primary and evilness is secondary White supremacy
- Continuing to look back. Reconciliation is not restitution. It is healing and moving forward in relationship. Christians are supposed to be new creations, leaving the old behind. We do have a choice to walk in this.
- Lack of communication
- Power/control
- Lack of communication and empathy
- Judgmental people
- The past, injustice and equality
- People who grow up with racist family members that taught them to think the way that they do
- Those who continue to foment dissent within the human community as a means to divide, control, disenfranchise segments of our communities, black and white
- Right wing politics and media
- Barriers in the heart and mind as well as systemic barriers in our country and culture
- Southern people who still believe in the confederacy
- Letting the horrible actions of the past get in the way of the good things of the present
- *Agape* love, love of money, southern rednecks, pride and ignorance
- What children learn at home from their parents, racism and prejudice is taught, children be taught to celebrate their differences
- The problem is not only majority towards minority racism, but minority towards majority, reverse racism should not be allowed either
- Embracing the past as history and fully understanding it. We should focus on generations to come so that we can rise above all that has happened.
- Not knowing personally a person of another race, stereotypes

Question 11: Do you believe that there is a correlation between reconciliation and social and economic justice?

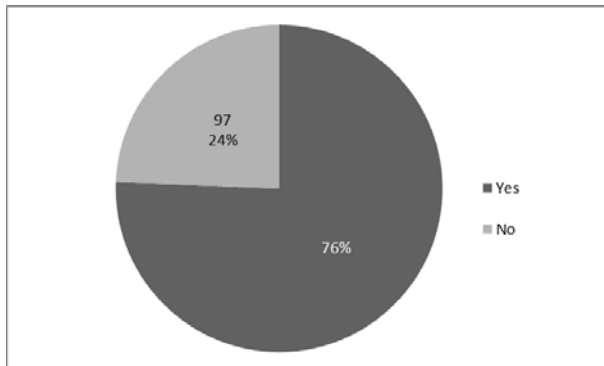


Figure 8: Question 11

- Yes: 71% or 302 responses of the total response.
- No: 23% or 97 responses of the total responses.

Question 12: Please elaborate on your response to question 11.

- People cannot live together and respect each other if they do not trust one another's motives.
- No justice, no reconciliation
- Socially I believe that racism is not accepted. But racism hides behind other ideas. We need to point out these false ideas, and show others what they really mean.
- At the root of it all is not being raised under good parenting or mentoring by that love and care. What also will help most is to know the love of God and follow Him.
- Social and economic justice will be one of the outcomes of reconciliation.
- White supremacy is the main problem. Judgment of people based on race, class, and socio economic status is the root of the problem.
- There can be no social or economic justice until we realize we are all members of ONE human community with a fate and destiny that is eternally intertwined.
- There seems to be a lot of talk about people who don't want to work hard to achieve their dreams. Some of these people expect things to be given to them.
- At this point in history any person's disenfranchisement is due to his/her own actions or acceptance of defeatist attitudes.
- Reconciliation is personal and structural
- Without reconciliation there will not be acknowledgement that those prior hurdles and strategies inhibited other groups from ascension. Reconciliation should open doors and alter paradigms of social and economic injustice.

- Must level the playing field. Justice is making wrong things right.
- Racial divisions have a long and systemic history in U.S. that has yet to be fully addressed.
- Racism is a place holder for class.
- I believe that our U.S. government is to blame for all of the conflict in the U.S.
- I believe that it is all spiritual. The dominant race controls the wealth and the power. If African Americans were in power whites would experience the same bigotry and racism.
- I don't know that social justice is possible, so long after the fact. Maybe after some have died, much of the damage is laid to rest.
- Justice is not possible without acknowledging and addressing the fundamental and systemic inequities in America.
- I believe social justice should come where it is due. But not everything merits social or economic justice.
- Reparations, equal access to resources equal reconciliation.
- Parenting, Schooling or financial status. These are not the minorities fault, but it also isn't due to social and economic justice.
- Often efforts of charity create an even greater divide, limited advancement and understanding rather than elevating communities and/or groups.
- Reconciliation is about empowering one another, not shaming or limiting.

Question 13: Please provide two suggestions for achieving racial reconciliation.

- More and better socio-economic education, more and better teaching of ethics and the humanities
- Promoting awareness and opportunities for truth telling and communication
- Group therapy
- All human behavior is based on motivation and ability. We need to make sure that individuals have the skills to have respectful dialogue. Relationships are made one conversation at a time. Opportunities to engage side by side in working on a common purpose such as helping others takes the focus off self and puts it on "us."
- Providing information about the historical roots of racism and economic oppression in the past
- Community forums on local issues
- Prayer focused on destroying and dismantling hatred, bigotry and racism

- Realizing that God sees all men as equal and never intended the current ethnic division
- Dealing with racism and its eradication at a national level and stop denying that it exists
- Policy at the highest level of government
- The end of racial profiling
- More discussion
- Truth and reconciliation Commissions like South Africa
- Lectures
- Learn from the past. Have conversations about other race and other “isms” that keep us from reaching out.
- Education, equal with education opportunities
- Ministries should intentionally model racial reconciliation with interracial relationships between churches.
- Bring people together. Lots and lots of meeting, talking, listening across economic, racial, ethnic, religious and national divisions
- More opportunities for discussions, forums, seminars, etc.
- Communication, joint outreaches
- Separation of church and state
- Personal responsibility
- People standing up together and showing people that it is time to change people in the country
- Focus on loving people, Sit down and get to know each other, work together as one
- Honest, open dialog, understanding interdependence
- More opportunities to interact with different people
- More communications among races, multi-racial worship services
- Formal mediation and counseling
- Provide relationship building activities
- Educate, worshipping together
- Better education in human relations
- Town meetings, education and more education
- Just being kind to each other can change a lot.

- Spiritual and mental counseling, learning vulnerability
- Creating and joining organizations that promote unity
- Intentional opportunities to come together, Listening
- Programs that encourage dialog, teach more people
- Teach reconciliation in the schools, diversity immersion

Question 14: Describe two ways in which my reconciliation lecture, sermon and/or discussion will influence your behavior.

- Practice reconciliation daily
- Understand how powerful the emotions of love and hate are
- Today has encouraged me greatly
- Pray continuously
- Provide me with more information for having honest dialog and communication
- The fact that many churches and Christians fail to talk about this issue on a more frequent basis makes it seem as though it has no relevance to one's faith. Nothing could be further from the truth. We need more talk and action on these issues. And not just on Sunday or in a crisis.
- I will start praying for reconciliation in our world.
- It will make me think before I speak.
- I see a role for Christianity here. It means people actually paying attention to the message.
- My eyes have been opened. I understand the message and don't want to cause more pain.
- Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, Matthew 5:44-45
- I will continue living as man in peace and harmony.
- As a teacher I will do my personal best to influence my students to love people for what they see on the inside, the heart.
- I pray daily for my children and that God's love will shine thru them.
- Pray for peace and be active in good works.
- Focus on key concepts of honesty, forgiveness and trust, commit to actively partnering with someone of the opposite race
- A sermon can help the soul where the discussion is for the person.
- I feel we are on a constant journey toward reconciliation.

Question 15: Please add any additional information that you would like to share.

- It is extremely important that people come together. The world is frighteningly divided these days. It isn't good for any of us.
- This is a much needed work. I pray that God will give you the where with-all to continue making a difference.
- I think that we should try my very practical attempts to get multi-racial groups together and start the process. The outcomes will direct the next actions to take.
- I recommend two books: "Talking When The Stakes are High" and "Power to Change Anything"
- Jesus prayed for Christians and admonished us to be as one; as He, the Father and the Holy Spirit are one.
- I hope that this study is a success.
- I think that it is imperative that we act now on reconciliation. Adding the story of reconciliation to our nation's story can do nothing but good things.
- Thank you for your work: important and patriotic!
- I will work for more peace that starts with me.
- A catalog of resources would be helpful. Some of us don't know how to begin. Some don't engage the conversation because they don't know how or where to begin.
- The heart has to change before the mind.
- I see attempts at reconciliation by upper and middle class folks of both races, but I fear it is happening less often in poor communities. Race reversals (role play) in every community Sensitivity training in every workplace, centers and church
- People want two things: to be loved and respected.
- Multicultural, multi economic group public schools are a great way to start this discussion.
- One thing that would help is for the leaders to actually try to do for their constituents.
- Ending racism will have to be national policy, and intentional.
- I appreciate what you are doing
- Books I recommend: *Reconciliation Blues*, *Divided By Faith*, Kairos Conference in Memphis.
- Let's HOPE.
- Transformed hearts and minds will transform communities.

The survey responses represented varying stages of development in faith and spiritual maturity. The responses also indicated that reconciliation training was not readily available through our churches, public sector or other sources. Seemingly, respondents also applied everyday common sense rationale to their suggestions with comments like “teach children at home,” or “tell the parents to teach respect not hatred.” The respondents provided a “cornerstone segment” of thoughtful and practical theological responses, based on biblical concepts and teaching. This cornerstone segment will be used to develop workshops and training that will be available to the faith community, public and private schools (middle through college) as well as the general public. Generally, individuals and institutions have been left on their own in developing and/or learning successful and strategic ways to interact with others and manage conflict.

There were also responses referencing the politics and how they play out in various areas of the country. Many respondents clearly indicated that they felt the government does and should play a major role in passing laws, monitoring prejudicial crime and behavior, and most of all protecting all citizens of the country.

Overall, there was a wealth of foundational information captured (for future reconciliation activity planning) by the survey responses in the sense of the recurring themes and requests:

- We want reconciliation among people in our country
- “Show us how” to do reconciliation.
- We need training (or education).
- We need reconciliation resources.
- We suggest communications (small groups, forums, workshops, etc.).
- We need intentional interaction.
- Teach a history of all cultures.
- Conflict Management classes

Recurring words included:

- Forgive
- Peace
- Together
- Restore
- Love
- Interpersonal
- Tolerance
- Relationship
- Recognition
- Humanity
- Rebuilding
- Truth
- History
- Correction

CHAPTER SIX

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

Organizing

I read several relevant books and periodicals. In addition I organized an intercessory prayer call for global and individual reconciliation that was very successful. I theorized that the “mothers” and “seniors” of the church could pray, even if they could not do anything else. I believe that everyone needs to feel valued, in or out of church. This worked especially well with younger individuals as well.

I maintained an up to date awareness of all of the latest events happening locally, nationally and globally. Our intercessory prayer group prayed for reconciliation throughout our world and individually as we became aware of the latest events. Key issues of prayer included:

- ISIS – the continuing aggression of militants in the name of Islam continues to be of great concern for the global world. U.S. Presidential decisions and the actions of the Congressional leaders are included in the prayers.
- Kidnapping of over 300 Nigerian girls
- The U.S economy
- Racism
- Ferguson, Mo., New York, NY, Cleveland, Ohio and all of the other locations where young black men have been killed in police encounters.
- Moral Mondays, Black Life is Important, public education, immigration and other social justice movements.

- All speaking engagements included references to local and national social and economic justice issues and events. These included NAACP events, Black History month events, visiting varying levels of educational institutions.

I received an invitation in 2014 from four organizations in Fayette County, Georgia to speak at the annual MLK memorial event. I received the invitation from The President of the Republican Party, the President of the Democratic Party, the President of the Tea Party, and the President of the NAACP—all in Fayette County. They wanted me to see and know that they understood reconciliation and could work together without having to relinquish any aspects of their moral and/or spiritual beliefs. They could be respectful and civil to each other.

Preaching

Selected messages are also included in Chapter 4. I believe that we learn to preach by preaching. In the meantime we continue to study the Word of God to show ourselves approved. I will preach wherever opportunities are provided.

My travel schedule reflects my attempts at sharing the Word of God wherever it takes me (Appendix D).

Ecumenical

I have worshipped with and preached at a various denominations of churches this past year. The churches include:

- The Church of the Nazarene
- Bethel A.M.E. Church
- Advent Episcopal
- Independent Presbyterian
- Temple Emmanuel
- Canterbury United Methodist

- Cumberland Presbyterian Church

I read several books whose authors were primarily clergy of varying

denominations writing on varied topics. The books included:

1. *The Harbinger* – Rabbi Johnathon Kahn

The author believes that seven warnings that have already been visited on America and are representative of God’s impending judgment. He sees 9/11 as the first warning.

2. *The Politics of Jesus* – Dr. Obery Hendricks

This author discusses the politics of Jesus and includes seven strategies that Jesus used including “Call the demon by name.” He also raises several questions.

How is it possible to profess a belief in Jesus, yet ignore the suffering of the poor and the needy? Just how truly faithful to the vision of Jesus are the many politicians who claim to be Christian?

3. *The Mystery of the Shemitah* – Rabbi Johnathon Kahn

The author of this book reveals the biblical progression of national judgment. If the nation does not heed the first warning, a second warning is given. The author feels that America is on a downward spiral. As the apostasy continues, so do the harbingers of judgment. The author believes that America’s future is contained in the Harbinger.

4. *The Path to Reconciliation* – Neil T. Anderson

Training ambassadors and connecting people to God and each other are the three main themes of this author.

5. *Thou Shalt Prosper: Ten Commandments for Making Money* – Rabbi Daniel Lapin

This book contains ten rules espoused by the Jewish community for lifelong financial prosperity.

6. *Black Prophetic Fire* – Cornell West

The absence of black preachers and prophetic leaders in the black churches and communities is noted and questioned by Cornell West.

7. *Just Mercy* – Bryan Stephenson

This author questions the pipeline system of mass incarceration for black men; but more recently young black boys. He also questions the seemingly arbitrary assignment of “adult status” to these young men as they are tried and sentenced. The author has recently been assigned to a Presidential Commission that will study the prison industrial complex.

8. *Called To Write* – Edna Ellison/Linda Gilden

This book provides principles, guidance and instruction for Christian writers using the bible; especially devotional and short inspirational stories. Provides seven principles for writing for Christians.

9. *Divided by Faith* – Michael Emerson/Christine Smith

An analysis and report of a survey completed by 2000 people addressing the problem of racial reconciliation appears to indicate that evangelicals are perpetuating the problem.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

I believe that in this season America is receiving a critical call to move to ‘higher ground.’ One might call this a “911 emergency call.” The call is a national call and a global call. And as in the call from God to each of us, I pray that we all hear this call. I pray that we become a nation of prayer. All of my experiences associated with this project and in my personal life strongly suggest that most Americans are ready to move beyond the sin of hatred and to higher ground. They are ready to achieve the reconciliation mandated by God. It remains to be seen as to whether we can and will, or not.

Divisive forces have long been at work in America and have now developed a choking strong hold; and yet we continue to simply “hope for the best.” We have failed thus far at the task of reconciliatory inclusion of those who have come to our country looking for ‘light’ and a brighter way of life. We have failed at the task of reconciliatory healing for the many individuals already living within our boundaries as they strived for a better future for themselves and their descendants. In general we have failed at achieving the concept of community. Many of us have not learned to simply live next door to someone who is different from us. There has existed since the founding of our country a compelling and echoing dichotomy between what we say versus what we do.

The statue of liberty stands as a symbol of hope for all who enter our borders. Our founding documents speak of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”, the “equality of all men”, and our citizens functioning as “one nation – under God.” “In God We Trust” is printed on our currency. The seasoned wordsmiths who fashioned our country’s founding documents did an excellent job. Their writings in mass also suggest that the founding fathers were very much aware of the presence of God in our country, and in the world. In a very real sense God was seen and revered as America’s architect. Psalm 127:1 tells us that if God is not the architect, we are laboring in vain.

The documented struggles of immigrants (Italians, Greeks, Hispanics, Irish, etc.), Native Americans and those unwillingly brought to America tell a different story. Their histories suggest an ongoing deference to the burdens and responsibilities of citizenship, and an ongoing default in receipt of citizenship privileges. Men have become specialists in the dehumanizing and degrading of the human spirit. Dehumanization was the first step in the persecution and annihilation of Jews in Germany. Men have become experts at walking “in and out” of their humanity. Hatred and evil are widespread. Hatred and evil are not sins to be ignored by Christians.

On June 1, 1858 President Abraham Lincoln wisely spoke these words: “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”²⁴ The same words are also recorded in the gospels of Mark (3:15), Luke (11:17) and Matthew 12:25. Matthew records: “But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. But with hope

²⁴ Abraham Lincoln, “A House Divided,”
<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/house.htm> (accessed March 11, 2015).

Thomas Paine told us in 1776: “We have it in our power to make the world over again.”²⁵

I pray that the individual, collective and pervasive sins of racism will not be our country’s demise.

We continue to have churches on every corner, but 11am on Sunday is still America’s most segregated hour. The absence of the teachings of the doctrine of the Kingdom of God looms large in our churches and even larger in our treatment of each other. Our failure at reconciliation is witnessed and substantiated daily in our various media forms, our increasing poverty and incarceration rates and other vital statistics. Can we really achieve a more perfect union? Can we become “the beloved community?” Where can we go from here?

I believe that ultimately there is one reconciliation and that is to God. I believe that when we are reconciled to God, we can be reconciled to our brothers. I believe that in God we live in that harmonious and peaceful state of mind that passes all understanding. Reconciliation to God enables reconciliation to man. Reconciliation to man is possible because of reconciliation to God. These vertical and horizontal relationships are co-dependent upon each other. In my readings I observed that most authors see diversity awareness, teaching tolerance and multiculturalism as a means of achieving reconciliation to our brothers.

Diversity, tolerance and multiculturalism do not represent reconciliation to God or to man. God created diversity and multiculturalism and the teaching of these as biblical reconciliation suggests that we have choices (or substitutes) in our faithful acceptance (or not) of God’s Word. If we would cease the use of substitutionary words and programs in

²⁵ Thomas Paine, Moncure Daniel Conway, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, vol. 1 (New York: G.P. Putnam’s a & Son, 1894), 90.

lieu of the Word of God, we could achieve all that God has created us to do. The Church's focus must be the intentional deprogramming of current generations from all of the negative examples they have seen and experienced. Even minimal success might enable their attempts to march and live in harmony with each other. The marching orders for harmonious Christian living are in the Word of God.

What do the people say? A survey of over one thousand individuals with over 425 respondents provided hopeful and positive responses to the question of reconciliation in our country. There were 22 states represented in the responses. Approximately 45% of the respondents were men and 55% were women. Young people under the age of 30 represented 62% of the responses. And a resounding 75% of the respondents believed that reconciliation was attainable during our lifetime. The implications of their hundreds of written responses suggest what I believe we all know. Reconciliation is a choice. Every minute of every day we have freedom of will. Choice and will are the operative words for issues mentioned in the initial two paragraphs.

In my various speaking engagements (locally and nationally) I encountered responses similar in nature. Individuals definitely understood reconciliation to God and our brother, desired to make reconciliation a reality and believed that we could make it a reality, if we really wanted to do it. So the operative words again are will and choice. For us it is choice, but for God it is a biblical imperative to be reconciled to Him, and to our brother. I believe that it is possible to do all that God has mandated in His Word. If He said do it, it is possible - with His help. Some believe this and some don't. Reconciliation remains our most challenging and most unfulfilled mandate.

We must develop and maintain an ‘inter-generational biblical training infrastructure’ so that subsequent generations are prepared for old challenges, as well as new challenges that are sure to come. Increasing diversity projections by the U.S. census means that we cannot afford to have any generation unprepared. The fundamentals of our theology and our faith must be sufficiently viable and anchoring to compliment ongoing national and global challenges and changes. I believe that we can begin a rebirth of our ‘Christian consciousness’ and our lack of reconciliation if we begin to teach again the Word of God. We can defeat the hatred and evil perpetrated by the enemy. A suggested biblical training curriculum for churches and specialty curriculum for other organizations is needed to place us on the path to entering the Kingdom of God. These suggestions are the result of my travel and interactions with thousands of individuals from all walks of life over the years; and the online survey results mentioned earlier.

I conclude this writing with the initial question asked at the beginning: “Can a man love God and hate his brother?” Paul has said unequivocally no. Hatred is antithetical to love and to God. Hatred and love cannot co-exist. God is love. Love and God are synonymous. They are co-dependents. God lives in those who love. Those who love - live in God. You cannot know God if you have no love. You cannot serve two masters or two Kingdoms: God (good) and sin (evil). The wages of sin is death. The reward of serving God is eternal life. Choose life.

Regardless of our unbelief and disobedience God’s promises are still valid and real today. We are descendants of Jacob and heir to God’s promises to the people of Israel (Genesis 32:28). Paul reminds us that in God’s election of Israel, there are always

believers and unbelievers. The unbelievers have failed to reconcile to God. Did they hear? Romans 10:9 says yes.

Did they believe, repent and confess the Lordship of Jesus? No. Galatians 1:18 says they will be delivered over to the wrath of God for eternal damnation. Being a descendant is not a guarantee of a place in God's family. Biological connection is not the issue of importance. A descendant of the faith tradition is not God's requirement and our guarantee of a place in God's Kingdom. Being reconciled to God is first and foremost in our relationship to our Creator.

Christians must not continue to allow the enemy to undermine God's plan for humanity. We must bring our current realities under the submission of the Word of God. We must call those things that are not, as though they were, until – they are. We must become vigilant watchmen that identify and reject early on anything or anyone that is antagonistic or contrary to Kingdom Doctrine. All of our lives are directly dependent on God. This was true at creation (Genesis 2:7), is true at regeneration and throughout our lives. I challenge us all to work toward eradicating individual, collective and systemic sin, and insuring the message of the gospel to all nations. Our prayers, our will and God's power can overcome any "so called power structure" created by man. To God be all glory.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

OLIVE BRANCH COMMUNITIES

By

CAROLYN MAULL MCKINSTRY

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

February 1, 2014

Challenge Statement

In 1963 Dr. Martin L. King stated, “We must face the sad fact that at eleven o’clock on Sunday morning when we stand to sing ‘In Christ there is no East or West’, we stand in the most segregated hour of America.” Today, the reality of this statement remains unchanged. As an ordained clergy woman, veteran civil rights activist, author and international traveler educating audiences on the Modern Civil Rights Movement, I can see that the biblical imperative of ‘loving others as ourselves’ remains an elusive commandment.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

“Separate schools must be established for the children of African descent. It is unlawful for colored children to attend any white school or any white children to attend a colored school.”¹

Birmingham, Alabama has been characterized by some as America’s Johannesburg, by others as a city of “hard core” resistance and by one of its’ former Mayors, Richard Arrington, Jr., as a city that needed to be “born again.” In a New York Times article written in 1960, Harrison Salisbury said that “fear and hatred gripped Birmingham.”² It was the most segregated, the most racist, and the most vicious city in the south. The white citizens of Birmingham enjoyed legalized segregation in every aspect of life for over 100 years. It was difficult for whites but even more so for blacks to imagine that any aspects of this lifestyle would ever change.

My initial introduction to segregation came when I was ten years old. My grandmother became very ill and was brought from Clanton, Alabama to Birmingham. Hospitals in Birmingham did not accept black patients. But when taken to a local hospital she was allowed to have a bed in the basement. My parents needed to be at work so I sat with my grandmother for about two weeks until she died. My second introduction to

¹ “Jim Crow Laws,” American Radio Works,
<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/remembering/laws.html>.

² Harrison E. Salisbury, “Fear and Hatred Grip Birmingham,” New York Times, April 12, 1960,
<http://reportingcivilrights.loa.org/authors/selections.jsp?authorId=70>

segregation occurred when I was in the eighth grade. I won the A. G. Gaston State-wide spelling competition, but could not participate in the national competition because of segregation. By the time I entered high school Governor George Wallace had made his famous “segregation now, tomorrow and forever speech³.”

In spite of itself Birmingham was seen as a “city of great promise”, a post-civil war city that was “on the move.” Birmingham’s natural resources (coal, iron ore and limestone) attracted settlers and immigrants from all over the United States and the world. In 1901 the state leaders of Alabama held a constitutional convention and a new constitution conceived in racism was born. The framework of the 1901 constitution insured the perpetuation of white supremacy and privilege in every aspect of life.

In 1954 the Supreme Court decision in Brown versus Board of Education had decreed integration with all deliberate speed, Birmingham schools remained segregated. The black community developed “self-contained communities” with schools, churches, businesses and homes. They refused to be held back and worked hard to insure that their children were educated and provided opportunities for advancement.

Beginning in 1950 a fiery and courageous young minister named Reverend Fred Lee Shuttlesworth emerged in Birmingham and the city came face to face with its’ mistreatment of its citizens of color, their demands for first class citizenship, and an end to segregation of public facilities, especially schools. Rev. Shuttlesworth invited Dr. Martin L. King to come to Birmingham and to also give voice to the struggle for equality and first class citizenship. Black homes, businesses and churches were routinely bombed in Birmingham in an attempt to intimidate, to frighten and to end the struggle for equality and equal access.

³ Governor George C. Wallace, Inaugural Address, January 14, 1963.

Birmingham soon came to be known around the world as bombingham. Both men reminded the state and the nation of their founding statutes declaring “all men were created equal and entitled to the pursuit of happiness.” Signs were carried by protesters asking: “can a man love God and hate his brother?” It was from this platform that Birmingham and its children marched until the back of segregation was broken. The historical records indicate that well over 5,000 adults and children marched and went to jail. The records also record their ages from 8 to 80 years old.

President John F. Kennedy subsequently issued a report on desegregation attempts in Alabama in September 1963, and ended it with words of hope of compliance by Alabama’s Governor George Wallace. Wallace responded to this report in the New York Times by saying, “in order to stop school integration, Alabama needed a few first class funerals.”⁴ Wallace got his first class funerals a short time later.

The end of legalized segregation resulted in the death of four little girls: Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carol Robertson and Cynthia Wesley. On September 15, 1963, a bomb exploded at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church killing four young girls and injuring many others. The bombing of the church was characterized by the media as the “bomb heard around the world.” On September 30, 1963 Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth spoke these words: “As shocked as we are about past and recent bombings and deaths, and as tired as we are of brutality by certain forces and neglect by officials, we still believe in non-violence as the way to solve problems and pledge ourselves anew to follow this course.”

One positive result of the Birmingham Civil Rights Movement was the development and construction of The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in 1993. The

⁴ New York Times, September 6, 1963.

Institute serves as a repository for pictures, documents, historical artifacts, etc. The attendance records indicate that people from all over the world come every single day of every year to visit the Institute and also to visit the church. Both are reminders of Birmingham's dark and difficult past. Both are reminders of the struggle of a people to be free. They want to touch the places and hear the story. They want to know how we survived and how we maintained a spirit of hope. Birmingham has a legacy of segregation, but also a legacy of hope. It stands as a "beacon" of eternal hope for its residents and its visitors.

I continue to receive invitations from around the nation and the world to come and share stories about Birmingham. Even during visits to Rome, India, and a monastery in Dublin, Ireland (Limerick), the residents knew the story of Birmingham, Alabama. I was invited to Cullman, Alabama in 2012. Cullman is the birthplace of Alabama Ku Klux Klan. In the past one would encounter a huge billboard as they entered the city of Cullman which read: "Don't let sundown catch you in Cullman ni----." I visited Cullman and was greeted by the Mayor, school superintendent and combined middle and high schools and faculty. Reconciliation awareness was clearly visible in Cullman.

We have made tremendous strides toward our goals of reconciliation and the beloved community. But sadly, much of Dr. King's commentary on segregated life still rings true today. In 1963, Dr. King stated, "We must face the sad fact that at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning when we stand to sing 'In Christ there is no East or West,' we stand in the most segregated hour of America." This too remains virtually unchanged.

CHAPTER 2

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

“We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator God with certain inalienable rights. That among these rights are life liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

America once again finds itself at the crossroads of a decision regarding its’ citizens of color. The question remains unanswered as to whether all citizens of this country are to be afforded equal access and opportunities. Dr. Martin L. King had a dream that one the nation would rise up and embrace all of its citizens, regardless of any differences. That dream is not yet fully realized. And I am still dreaming. I believe that one individual can accomplish a lot, all be it one person at a time.

Our country has officially claimed February as annual Black History month. We have written books, built educational institutions and museums, and created support organizations to remind us of those times when we didn’t get it right in our country. Many of our states have developed educational curricula in the public schools regarding African Americans, Irish Amerians, Native Americans, Japanese Americans and the other immigrants represented in our society in America. We are living perhaps in the most diverse period ever in America. The United States Census indicates that by 2040 we will have no “majority minority” in this country.

Dr. King believed that the three moral imperatives of our time were racism (and its perennial ally - exploitation), poverty and war. He believed that like men - they were

each interdependent. He believed that we had the means to solve the problem, but perhaps not the will.⁵ America continues to be plagued by prejudice and racial hatred. A recent report by The Southern Poverty Law Center counted 1,007 active hate groups in the United States in 2012. Only organizations and their chapters known to be active during 2012 are included. Hate groups have beliefs or practices that attack or malign entire classes of people.⁶

In the United States today more than 11.7% of white America lives in poverty; 25.7% of black America lives in poverty and 23.3% of Latino or Hispanic individuals live in poverty.⁷ And we continue to be plagued by war and the threat of more wars. The same three ills that plagued us fifty years ago continue to plague us today. And yet we still have a church on every corner. I believe that God's ministers belong on the front line in protest of each of these three ills in America. Ingrained in each of our religious traditions is the belief that by one God we were all created, and that we were created in His image.

When we see others suffering, we should see ourselves. Something in us ought to be "forever restless" as we continually encounter our sisters and brothers impacted by these dynamics. Our common humanity and the Spirit of the Almighty should rise up in us in righteous indignation at the neglect, destruction and the decay of God's creation. The revolution of values purported by Dr. King must become reality if we are to avoid destruction and an end tantamount to the one described below by James Baldwin.

⁵ King, Dr. Martin L. *Where do we go from here: Essential Writings and Speeches*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1986.

⁶ Southern Poverty Law center @<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map>

⁷ Alabama Poverty Project @<http://www.scribd.com/doc/144513416/2013-Alabama-Poverty-Data-Sheet>

“A bill is coming that I fear America is not prepared to pay. “The problem of the twentieth century”, wrote W. E. B. Dubois 100 years ago, “is the problem of the color line.” A fearful and delicate problem, which compromises, when it does not corrupt, all the American efforts to build a better world- here, there, or anywhere....And here we are, at the center of the arc, trapped in the most gaudiest, most valuable, and most improbable water wheel the world has ever seen. Everything now, we must assume is in our hands; we have no right to assume otherwise. If we – and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on or create the consciousness of others – do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in song by a slave is upon us: God gave Noah the rainbow sign, no more water, the fire next time!”⁸

⁸ Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Dell Printing, 1963.

CHAPTER 3 PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Raise the awareness of churches in the Birmingham Metro area of the sustained segregation that exists.

Strategy 1: Develop and utilize sermonic messages around the theme of reconciliation.

Strategy 2: Develop a 52-week devotional.

Strategy 3: Utilize various forms of contemporary media in delivery.

Strategy 4: Plan a Town Hall Meeting or Conference for Faith groups.

Evaluation: Receive feedback from the sermon presentation. 50% of all participants at the town hall meeting or conference will complete a pre and post questionnaire.

Goal 2: Select a team of 5-7 persons who will assist in the development and launching of the virtual Olive Branch communities focused on reconciliation awareness and intentionality. Identify and include a multi-racial/socio economic group of teenagers or college students.

Strategy 1: Develop criteria and select team.

Strategy 2: Orientation of the team.

Strategy 3: Develop three culturally experiential exercises for the team (stereotypes and attitudes tests, bus ride and a faith based experience).

Evaluation: Debrief and discussion following completion of orientation and exercises. Web site development completed.

Goal 3: Team and CM will develop the virtual community.

Strategy 1: (Olive Branch Communities.Org.) Website Development

Strategy 2: Devotional (52 week Olive Branch Communities devotional)

Strategy 3: Develop diverse web based presentations.

Evaluation: Successful development of the initially proposed strategies

Goal 4: Launching of Olive Branch Virtual Community

Strategy 1: Reception

Strategy 2: Connect to Birmingham/National Social Media

Strategy 3: Print book marks or similar tokens of remembrance

Evaluation: Responses from users/viewers

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Historical/Analysis of spiritual life and practice

What has been the church's role historically regarding reconciliation and in general today? Are there best practices available? Do churches and institutions teach and practice "modeling reconciliation" today?

Clergy was actively involved in the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa. They helped set the biblical tone through the use of various biblical passages and by actively engaging the biblical commandments given for living in relationship one with another. Many faith groups "advertise" their diversity and acceptance of all peoples. Where are these churches and do they have "best practices and "lessons learned" available to others attempting to emulate the "love my neighbor" imperative?

Biblical/Theological

Can a man really love God, whom He has not seen, and hate his neighbor whom he sees everyday?

The second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Romans 13:10 expands this verse to say "love does its neighbor no harm." If you love me follow my commandments. How do we learn to love and treat every individual we encounter as our neighbor? Can we ignore the hungry, the naked, the cold and the imprisoned and still

profess God's love? How can we assure our success of embracing and living this biblical imperative? How do we develop an ethos of compassion and lament toward all people? How do we envision every human encounter as a "potential angel unaware?"

Social/Political/Economic/Ethical

What role did the faith community play in the overall success of the Modern Civil Rights Movement? What is the faith's community role today in the development of a reconciled world? What is the role of scriptural teaching in the formation of our social justice ethic? How will our growing diversity be impacted by this ethic?

The Civil Rights Movement grew out of the heart of the church itself. God's Ministers were on the front line fighting for their people. The church represented the "seat" of the social justice discussion. Reverend Dr. Wilson Fallin in his book characterized the black church as "a shelter in the time of storm." Storms continue to manifest today in various ways, but seemingly the churches have moved to the periphery of the storm. Has the church abdicated its' responsibility in fighting for "the least of these?"

We are also living perhaps in the most diverse time in our country's history. We are experiencing continuing and ominous poverty. Reconciliation awareness and intentionality must become an ongoing mandate for the faith community if we are to continue to co-exist in a meaningful way in God's world.

CHAPTER 5 EVALUATION PROCESS

Method of evaluation 1

Utilize “Survey Monkey” to evaluate activities where appropriate. Candidates will receive email prompt and instruction regarding completion of the surveys. Data will be stored online and downloaded into an excel spreadsheet for analysis.

Method of evaluation 2

Sermons, Devotional and Conference completed with feedback.

Method of evaluation 3

Web site developed and functional with online feedback by the end of 2014.

Method of evaluation 4

Obtain nonprofit status from the state of Alabama. Complete required application for attainment of 501C 3 status for Olive Branch Communities.org.

CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

The Process

The members of the site team shared invaluable input into the process of competency assessment. A brief review of my previous work experience and various projects of substantial magnitude was done. Competencies were selected which would become the central focus of future development and assessment. The team reviewed my ministerial self-assessment with options to concur, add or challenge any portion of the assessment provided.

Faith-Rooted Community Organizer

Candidate understands the dynamics of faith rooted organizing and nonviolence; and is able to analyze social issues from a Bible perspective for contextualization and appropriation.

Theologian

Candidate understands church doctrine, scripture and sociology, relates well to all congregants and believes that the church's ultimate goal should be intentional inclusion of people of all cultures.

Preacher

Candidate has demonstrated her ability to research, organize and deliver a well prepared Biblically based sermon.

Worship Leader

Candidate has occasionally served in this capacity but will seek more opportunities for becoming “seasoned” since worship leadership has not been an integral element of her current responsibilities.

Prophetic Agent

Candidate exhibits deep knowledge of injustice in the world and exhibits empathy and compassion for victims. She works with others to alleviate conditions and policies that facilitate injustice.

Leader

Candidate motivates and respects others as well as learns from them. She values organization and expressions of appreciation and accomplishment.

Religious Educator

Candidate is able to prepare lessons and instruct, and is generally very knowledgeable of her subject. She uses various learning models so as to include all styles and preferences of learning.

Counselor

Candidate listens attentively. She is able to identify spiritually and promote healing in difficult circumstances. She is open and accepting of all individuals.

Pastor

Candidate has not held the title of Pastor. In the absence of a Pastor she has served as Trustee Board Chair performing church management functions and pastoral duties.

Spiritual Leader

Candidate communicates spiritual presence and power. She is familiar with the spiritual practices of the Baptist and other traditions. She has led many retreats.

Ecumenist

Candidate has deep knowledge and appreciation of other cultures and faith traditions. She is comfortable in settings at home and abroad.

Witness or Evangelist

Candidate speaks candidly regarding her faith and God's revealed presence throughout her life. She bears witness to the truth and "good news" of the gospel.

Administrator

Candidate is an excellent administrator and project manager. She has certifications in project management and has worked with budgets, fund raising campaigns, audits, etc.

Professional

Candidate strives to represent all aspects of ministry life professionally - with all people at all times in expression and in performance.

Financial Management

Candidate has an undergraduate degree in economics and handles budgets, audits, taxes and forecasting very well. She has served as Trustee Board Chair during a prior 18 month absence of a Pastor.

Technology/Social Media Management

Candidate is a retired telecommunications employee and has a good working knowledge of historical and current technologies.

Professional Skills

Candidate is a good listener and plans well. She works well with others.

Competencies Chosen for Development

PREACHER: Prepare spiritually transformative sermons based on an inclusive theology that is reflective of a multi-cultural and multi-racial society.

Strategy 1: Prepare a three sermon series.

Strategy 2: Record the sermon series.

Strategy 3: Place on Olive Branch Communities site.

Strategy 4: Request evaluation from the project team.

Strategy 5: Consult with faculty at Beeson Divinity School: Dr. Robert Smith, Dr. Timothy George, etc.

Evaluation: Provide evaluation instrument for each sermon to project team.

Evaluation will reflect questions regarding theology, context and understanding.

ECUMENIST: Candidate reaches out to other faith traditions and seeks opportunities for interdenominational worship and educational experiences. Candidate feels the need to be more intentional about other denominations and faiths.

Strategy 1: Visit and worship in three alternate faith denominations.

Strategy 2: Read relevant related materials regarding various faith groups.

Strategy 3: Facilitate interfaith worship among churches.

FAITH ROOTED ORGANIZING: A faith rooted organizer inspires, equips and engages people of faith for carrying out God's plan for justice and peace in his/her community and in the world.

Strategy 1: Read relevant materials regarding non-violence. Incorporate into sermon and devotional materials.

Strategy 2: Maintain an awareness of current issues related to the society in which we live and work to encourage participation in solutions.

Strategy 3: Use speaking opportunities to provide analysis in the light of scripture, theology and social sciences of current barriers to reconciliation in the congregation/ministry/community.

**Appendix A
TIMELINE/BUDGET**

| Date | Task/Activity | Tools Necessary to Complete task | Person Responsible | Budgetary Considerations | Source Funding |
|-------------|---|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2/2014 | Obtain Project Proposal | | | | |
| 2/2014 | Meet with Advisor | | | | \$750 |
| 2/2014 | Confirm GBM as fiscal agent | | | | |
| 2/2014 | Develop Criteria Olive Branch Team | | | | |
| | Administrative Assistant | | | | |
| | Editor | | | | |
| | Photographer | | | | |
| 2/2014 | Assemble Olive Branch Team and Meet | | | | |
| 2/2014 | Develop Delivery Outline for Olive Branch Team | | | | |
| 2/2014 | Dinner meeting with site team | | | | \$200 |
| 2/2014 | Determine grants & do applications-deadlines before July 2014 | | | | -- |
| 2/2014 | Secure web master | | | | \$1,000 |
| 3/2014 | Design web site | | | | |
| 3/2014 | Secure attorney for 501C 3 state designation | | | | \$2,500 |
| 6/2014 | Schedule "awareness raising" event | | | | \$2,000 |
| 6/2014 | Schedule 2 on site visitations Mississippi Alabama | | | | \$2,000 \$ 500 |

| Date | Task/Activity | Tools Necessary to Complete task | Person Responsible | Budgetary Considerations | Source Funding |
|-------------|---|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 6/2014 | Begin Olive Branch Curriculum Development Print materials | | | | \$1,000 |
| 2/2014 | Determine Speaking dates | | | | |
| 2/2014 | Determine travel dates | | | | |
| 9/2014 | Develop Sermons | | | | |
| 11/2014 | Develop Devotional | | | | |

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APPENDIX B Reconciliation Survey

LINK TO THE RECONCILIATION SURVEY

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1rBCCeSel6Pn6qjoOfnaAmbgK9ti2BNgcFdtL17hhO3A/viewform?c=0&w=1&usp=mail_form_link

RECONCILIATION SURVEY

Please assist us by answering the following questions as we attempt to make "reconciliation" a reality in our lifetime.

*** Required**

Date *

Please provide today's date.

| | | |
|-------|-----|------|
| Month | Day | 2014 |
|-------|-----|------|

Your Location

Please tell us the state you live in.

Gender

- ☐ male
- ☐ female

Please provide your age range.

- ☐ 30 or younger
- ☐ 33 -50
- ☐ Over 51

Please tell us about your cultural identity.

Race

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Latino
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Other:

Please tell us about your religious preferences.

- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Islamic

- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Not a member of an organized religion

Please provide your definition of reconciliation.

Do you believe in biblical reconciliation?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

I encounter reconciliation materials: sermons, lectures, books, etc.

How often?

- ☐ Daily/weekly
- ☐ once per month
- ☐ 2 -6 times year
- ☐ never

Do you believe that racial reconciliation is achievable either now or in the next generation's lifetime?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What do you see as the primary obstacle or barrier to racial reconciliation?

Do you believe that there is a correlation between reconciliation and social and economic justice?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please elaborate on your response to the previous question..

Optional

Please provide two suggestions for achieving racial reconciliation.

Be brief and concise.

Describe two ways in which today's reconciliation lecture, sermon and/or discussion will influence your future behavior.

Please add any additional information that you would like to share.

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

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APPENDIX C
Four Week Devotional

Week 1

2 Corinthians 5: 20-21

20) *"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God was making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21) God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."*

KEY THOUGHT:

God's redemption and restoration is a "no fault" operation available 24/7.

EXPOSITION:

Christ died for the sins of the world, that we might have the choice of eternal life with God. The Bible from the Old Testament to The New Testament is God in a mode of constant restoration of His creation through His redeeming grace. He is patient, not willing to lose a single one of us (2 Peter 3:9). Salvation need only be claimed. As His ambassadors we thank Him by telling our story, lifting Him up and bringing others to Him.

ACTIONS FOR THE WEEK:

Ask God to show you the area in your life each day where prayerful re-enforcement for a reconciled spirit is needed.

PRAYER: Guide me oh God.

Create in me a reconciled spirit that I might be a successful ambassador daily in every mission that I encounter. Amen.

Week 2

Romans 12: 17-18

17) "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18) If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all everyone."

KEY THOUGHT:

I can live in peace with everyone.

EXPOSITION:

Never repay evil deeds with more evil deeds. Let your honesty and virtue be unquestioned. Avoid conflict. Live at peace with all men whenever it is within your power to do so.

ACTIONS FOR THE WEEK:

Pray for a peaceful spirit and demeanor each day

PRAYER:

Dear God, Grant me the wisdom daily that will allow me to bring peace to every situation that I encounter. Keep me in perfect peace as I keep my mind focused on you. Amen

Week 3

James 3:18

18) "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."

KEY THOUGHT:

We sow and we reap. We reap what we have sown.

EXPOSITION:

God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. True peacemakers sow seeds of peace and reap a harvest of good things.

ACTIONS FOR THE WEEK:

Sow the seeds of peace daily. Thank God each day for the opportunity to sow peace in His name.

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for giving me the spirit of peace. Help me to bring order to disorder daily wherever I may encounter it. Amen.

Week 4

Ephesians 5:1

1) *"Be imitators of God."*

KEY THOUGHT:

Follow God's example in everything that you do.

EXPOSITION:

Follow God's example in words and deeds. Let everyone you encounter see God in you.

ACTIONS FOR THE WEEK:

Provide an unexpected blessing to someone. Let them see the love of God in you.

PRAYER:

God help me see each opportunity to be a blessing to someone daily.
Amen.

Appendix D
Speaking Schedule 2014-2015

Location is Birmingham, and message is reconciliation unless otherwise noted.

BCRI=Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

| Date | Entity/Location | Nature of Event |
|-------------|--|--|
| 1/27/14 | Princeton Hospital | Sermon/lecture to Chaplains |
| 2/1/14 | Sixteenth St Church | Dr. Timothy George/Beeson Faculty |
| 2/15/14 | Greater Shiloh Church | Black History Workshop |
| 2/16/14 | St Paul AME Church Sylacauga, Al | Sermon on Reconciliation |
| 2/18/14 | Mountain Brook Elementary | Speak to Students |
| 2/19/14 | Advent Women's Luncheon | Speak to Women of Church |
| 2/22/14 | MLK Unity Dinner/Banquet Carrolton, Al. | Keynote |
| 2/26/14 | New Bethel AME Church Atlanta, Ga. | Reconciliation Lecture |
| 2/27/14 | North Hall/New Hope Middle | Dalton, Ga. |
| 3/1/14 | Daughters of American Revolution | Keynote @ The Club |
| 3/9/14 | Sankofa Clergy/Earl James | BCRI/Reconciliation |
| 3/12/14 | Rev Dr. Todd Allen | History/Reconciliation Lecture |
| 3/18/14 | Chamblee Charter High School Atlanta, Ga. | The Beloved Community w/Andrew Young |
| 3/29/14 | St Luke AME Church | Sermon on Reconciliation |
| 4/26/14 | Tuscaloosa, Al. Airport Ramada Inn | Thelma Nims Event/Award Recipient |
| 5/14/14 | PEO Philanthropic Sisterhood | Luncheon Presenter/Reconciliation |
| 5/17/14 | Brown vs Board of Education Topeka, Kansas | 60 year Keynote |
| 6/1/14 | CDF Freedom Schools Training Clinton, Tn. | Lessons in History |
| 7/13/14 | AKA Town Hall Meeting Charlotte, NC. | Panel Speaker |
| 8/8/14 | African American Assoc. of Museums | Keynote |
| 9/12/14 | Mayor's Empowerment Event | Honoree |
| 9/23/14 | Duke University Seminary Students | Reconciliation Sermon |
| 10/16/14 | Jubilee Day/Fisk University Nashville, TN | Keynote |
| 10/13/14 | Class on writing Devotionals | Samford University/student |
| 10/16/14 | BCRI/Pennyman Tours | History Lecture (exceptional students) |

| Date | Entity/Location | Nature of Event |
|-------------|--|--|
| 10/24/14 | Focus on the Family Denver, Colorado | 3 day broadcast/forgiveness/reconciliation |
| 10/31/14 | Paul Quinn College Dallas, Texas | Keynote/Alumni Meeting |
| 11/4/14 | Church of The Nazarene | Reconciliation Sermon |
| 11/6/14 | Ala Appleseed Awards Luncheon | Invocation/Prayer |
| 11/13/14 | Lafayette High School | History/Reconciliation |
| 11/22/14 | Shiloh Baptist Church | Workshop/History |
| 11/29/14 | Riverchase United Meth Church | Reconciliation Lecture |
| 12/2/14 | Diane Fausto Vasconceles Former Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church of Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1973-1976 Former Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1985-2006 Denominational Leadership -President, Brazilian Baptist Convention (eight terms between 1991-2006); President, City of Rio Baptist Convention (seven terms between 1990-2005); President, Union of Baptists in Latin America, 1998-2001 | Day of lecture/tour/discussion regarding race and religion in Birmingham, AL |
| 1/7/15 | Wesleyan Theological Seminary | Reconciliation lecture |
| 1/17/15 | Cumberland Presbyterian Church Hunstville (Triana), AL. | Historical Lecture and Q/A |
| 1/19/15 | MLK Annual Event Goldsboro, NC. | Keynote |
| 2/5-7/15 | Books Alive Writers Conference Panama City Beach, Fl. | Morning/afternoon lecture Gulf State College (Two lectures) |
| 2/21/15 | Birmingham Fisk University Club The Summit/Bham | Invocation/Prayer |
| 2/25-27/15 | Buffalo NY Public Schools Buffalo, NY. | Keynote & Stream Live Lecture Visit 5 Public Schools |
| 3/3/15 | University of Seattle Dr. David Domke | Sixteenth St Church Historical lecture/sermon |
| 3/6/15 | Sixteenth Street Church Dr. Cynthia Pinchback Hines | Lecture/Q/A Cincinnati, Ohio |

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